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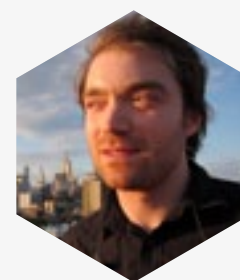
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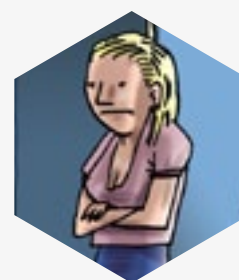
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**REHASHED**

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Photograph by  
Will Lipman for Distro





# SHUTTING DOWN...

DISTRO  
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A black and white portrait of Christopher Trout, a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a white shirt and a dark jacket. He is looking slightly to the right. The background behind him is a stylized, pixelated red and white graphic.

EDITOR'S  
LETTER

BY CHRISTOPHER TROUT


**There are few things** more heart-breaking for an editor than turning the lights off on a publication. Unfortunately, today marks the second time I've had to perform that unrewarding task. And while I plan to make good on my promise to take what we've learned here at Distro and transfer it to Engadget at large, I'm no less disheartened to have to flip the switch.

When Tim Stevens asked me to take the reins of what was then referred to as Project X, I was skeptical. It was the summer of 2011, just over a year since the release of the first iPad, and tablet magazine publishing was largely an untested market. Sure, mainstream media was investing massive amounts of money in the space — we're looking at you, Rupert — but part of me couldn't shake the feeling that turning a blog into a magazine (digital or otherwise) was a step back, not a step forward.

I couldn't have been more wrong. We've published 109 issues of Distro, seen nearly a half-million downloads

of our various apps and consistently reached digital readership numbers that meet and exceed those of old-guard media brands. Meanwhile, publishers continue to flock to the tablet as a means of distribution. According to our latest (and last) Weekly Stat, at Distro's launch, there were 562 magazine apps in the US; as of last count (Q4 2012), there were 1,871. Some of those magazines will thrive. Others will eventually fold, and while Distro will be counted among the latter, I'm lucky to have had the chance to work with such a talented group to do something that few, if any, had ever attempted. It hasn't been easy, but working ahead of the curve never is.

In our final issue, we pay homage to a group of prophetic projects that failed to catch on. From Microsoft's SPOT watch to the ill-fated QUBE, these devices informed future triumphs and proved that success can't be measured by sales alone.

Sometimes, a lasting influence is the sweetest reward. 



# COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS, iOS CRUSH AND BOUNTIFUL BANDS



Touch article names  
to read full threads

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INBOX



**MICROSOFT'S MOBILE  
MONSTER**  
ISSUE 108,  
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2013

“It is the best decision they could have made. Now they have no excuse but to own all with WP. Love it or hate it, it's in for the long haul and will most likely be number two by the end of this decade. My dream of having an OS that is just cleanly connected between my phone, tablet, laptop, desktop, gaming system, and by extension TV is becoming

more and more likely.”  
— **ZENMASTER**

“Nokia and Microsoft working together have produced far better phones than either alone.”  
— **NATHANZZ**

**iPHONE 5c**  
ISSUE 108,  
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2013

“I think iOS 7 was designed on the Candy Crush theme...”  
— **MK2**

“Don't underestimate the power of color...”  
— **APPTODAY**

“Teenagers will like it. I think it looks kinda cool and iOS really matches the colors. I do however think that for \$550 unlocked and \$100 with contract it's *way* too expensive. Should have been \$0-50

on contract, \$399 off contract (unlocked).”  
— **TEREKIDI**

**iPHONE 5s**  
ISSUE 108,  
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2013

“For all those dismissing 64-bit and biometrics, mark my words, every flagship phone will have these features in 12 months. These two things are actually the first real innovations we've seen in the smartphone market for a while.”  
— **PODGYDAD**

“\$100 says that Touch ID *will* work with a chopped off finger, and that we will have a YouTube video to prove it in less than 30 days after launch.”  
— **ARUPAEO**

“One thing the other major phone makers need to



learn from Apple is [the] inclusion of multiple frequency bands. They say Apple phones are overpriced and all that but how come they don't include as many bands as Apple? I want my phone to work on all carriers everywhere."

—MRCERI

THE UNLIKELY FATHER OF  
WEARABLE COMPUTING  
ISSUE 107,  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2013

"Smart guy, no doubt, but his efforts were illegal and dangerous. It took cojones to try and trick Vegas in the 1960s. If you were caught, you might be banned, or you might end up under a pile of dirt in the Nevada desert. As for wearable computing, I think heart pacemakers of the early '60s were really the first practical example."

—JS73091

"We could also say that the world's first pocket electronic calculator 1964 could lay claim to the title!"

—GAMINGEXPERT

MOTOROLA DROID MAXX  
ISSUE 108,  
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2013

"It really surprises me that such a big battery fits in a phone so similar in size to many other phones, yet so many other phones use such a pathetically small battery. Take the HTC One for example. It is the same height, slightly narrower, *thicker* and *heavier* than the Droid Maxx but for some reason has a battery that is 35% smaller. The fact that a phone the size and weight of the Droid Maxx can have such a large battery is proof that every other phone has a much smaller battery than it could have. ¶ I wish the Moto X had the same size battery in proportion to its total size and weight as the Droid Maxx has."

—JIMV1983





# ENTER

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EYES-ON

## STASH STAINLESS BASS

UP  
TO 11

Tap for  
detail

THE  
TUBE

HEAVY  
METAL

### TUNES OF STEEL

Guitar manufacturers large and small crank out some pretty ridiculous work in their custom shops, but one silver-clad axe has kept our attention. The Stash Stainless Bass claims to be the only such instrument constructed out of 100 percent stainless steel and hand assembled by designer Stan Potyrala. The result is an aggressive-looking product with a distinct tubular neck that's primed for intense rhythms.

**THE DAMAGE: \$3,000**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILL LIPMAN; MODEL: GABI HOLZWARTH; MAKEUP: JACKEE NICOLE VELASQUEZ



# ENTER

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EYES-ON

**STASH  
STAINLESS  
BASS**



**UPTO 11**

Even the controls are steel. Using the material for the instrument allows it to withstand those pesky temperature fluctuations and better stay in tune.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILL LIPMAN; MODEL: GABI HOLZWARTH; MAKEUP: JACKEE NICOLE VELASQUEZ





# ENTER

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EYES-ON

**STASH  
STAINLESS  
BASS**



## THE TUBE

A unique tube-shaped neck enhances the look while offering a more natural feel for musicians.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILL LIPMAN; MODEL: GABI HOLZWARTH; MAKEUP: JACKEE NICOLE VELASQUEZ



# ENTER

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EYES-ON

**STASH  
STAINLESS  
BASS**



## HEAVY METAL

Weighing in at 10 lbs. (4.5 kg), the Stash Stainless Bass is constructed entirely out of steel, from the body to the bridge and all connecting hardware.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILL LIPMAN; MODEL: GABI HOLZWARTH; MAKEUP: JACKEE NICOLE VELASQUEZ





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# MICROSOFT SURFACE 2

**Microsoft just announced** the Surface 2, the successor to the original Surface RT tablet. If you're new to the whole Surface thing, and just thinking of getting your first Windows tablet, you'll probably be able to appreciate how thin and light the Surface 2 is. But you might appreciate it even more if you own one of the first-gen models: the tablet is lighter than we remember it being, and there's just generally less of it to hold onto.

While the original shipped with a 1,366 x 768 panel, this one moves up to



**PRICE: \$449 & UP**

**AVAILABILITY: OCTOBER 22ND**

**THE BREAKDOWN: MICROSOFT'S SURFACE 2 SLIMS DOWN FROM THE ORIGINAL AND SPORTS A TWO-POSITION KICKSTAND.**

a 1080p screen — the same one used on the new Surface Pro 2, as a matter of fact. Truthfully, it's tough to appreciate the difference in sharpness without the side-by-side comparison, but even so, the screen here is still more than sharp enough for a 10.6-inch display.

Kind of like a chaise lounge at a pool, the kickstand can click back into two positions: the fairly upright one you're used to, and a wider setting that allows the screen to lie farther back. In particular, Microsoft claims that this second kickstand setting allows the tablet to balance better when it's resting on your lap. The leaned-back angle means you've got an even better defense against glare caused by the screen's glossy finish. Also, the kickstand digs into your legs less at that angle.

Lastly, we got a look at the new Touch Cover 2 keyboard, which will be sold alongside the new Surface tablets. As before, it's a polyurethane affair: water-resistant with nearly flat keys. Though the pressure sensitivity has been improved, it was tough to notice the difference after just a few minutes of hands-on time. What you will notice is the backlighting — a feature that was missing from all of last year's keyboard covers.



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# MICROSOFT SURFACE PRO 2

**Here it is:** Microsoft's powerhouse Surface Pro 2. As we've seen and heard already, Microsoft's follow-up to the Surface Pro is thinner and considerably faster.

With the new model, Microsoft tells us to expect 50 percent more color accuracy, better graphics and 20 percent faster performance. As far as we can

**PRICE: \$899 & UP**

**AVAILABILITY: OCTOBER 22ND**

**THE BREAKDOWN: THE SURFACE PRO 2 FOCUSES ON POWER PERFORMANCE AT A STEEP \$899 ALONGSIDE A FLEET OF ADD-ONS.**

tell, the Pro 2 will only be offered with a Core i5 Haswell processor clocked at 1.6GHz, and you can choose from 4GB or 8GB of RAM. If it wasn't quite clear what makes the Pro more expensive than the Tegra 4-powered Surface 2, we'll spell it out once more: performance, plain and simple. That said, we can't speak much to the software experience at this early date, so we'll jump right into the hardware.

Physically, the Pro 2 is an impressive specimen, thanks to Redmond's now-trademark magnesium build, which feels extremely sturdy, both in terms of ruggedness and weight. True, it's not going to weigh your wrists down terribly, but it's not going to win over those who value a skinny silhouette over heavy-hitting performance, either. The 0.53-inch thickness does allow for a generous selection of ports and the Pro 2's form factor allows for a 42Wh battery, which should net you 60 percent longer battery life than the original Pro.

We had a brief moment to play with the desktop dock, which supports up to a 3,840 x 2,160 resolution on an external display, and found that removing and attaching the tablet felt plenty secure. And then there's the Surface Pro 2's pen, which will come bundled with even the \$899 base configuration. Apart from raw performance, it's one of the machine's biggest differentiators from the Surface 2, and it looks to offer the same Wacom tech and pressure sensitivity as last time around.



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ENTER

HANDS-ON

# PLAYSTATION VITA [2013]

**PRICE:** 18,980 YEN  
(ABOUT \$190)

**AVAILABILITY:**  
OCTOBER 10TH  
(JAPAN)

**THE BREAKDOWN:**  
THE NEW VITA  
SHEDS SOME  
WEIGHT AND  
ROUNDS THE  
EDGES FOR MORE  
COMFORTABLE  
MOBILE GAMING.

**Just like** the PlayStation Portable before it, the PlayStation Vita comes in iterations. There's the standard, original Vita, and then there's the new, even nicer version. Sony unveiled that new iteration recently at a Japanese event, and we got our first hands-on with it at the Tokyo Game Show 2013. So, what's different? Not too much. As it turns out, it's still a Vita.

The good news is that it's a far lighter, more comfy version of the Vita you already know and (maybe) love. Rounded edges make holding the Vita distinctly less abrasive — the sharper angles on the original Vita were pretty from a design perspective, but not so much from an ergonomic standpoint. The buttons have been rejiggered as well, with a solid click for each (the start / select / PS Home buttons are also all now circles instead of ovals). And hey, the micro-USB port for charging is an unbelievably welcome addition. Gone are the days of your proprietary Vita charging cable (though there's still a port for it as well, should you refuse to change).

And that's not the only ergonomic improvement: the new Vita is dramatically lighter than its predecessor, making it easier to take on the go. We're told that its battery life is also much improved, but we've yet to see that play out in real life, so we'll reserve judgment for now.



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# PLAYSTATION VITA TV



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**The PlayStation Vita TV** is an aberration, but it's also another smart move from a company that's been on the gaming offensive since its February kickoff event for the PlayStation 4. In short, Vita TV is a Vita without a screen, encased in a small, white plastic box and meant to plug into your home entertainment system. It plays Vita games; it runs Vita game carts; and it does all the other Vita stuff (media streaming, PSone games, etc.). The Vita TV's only major difference from the handheld version is that Vita TV streams PlayStation 4 games from within the same WiFi under its "PS4 link" app, while it still goes under the Remote Play moniker on the portable iteration.

We didn't get hands-on time with Vita TV at its coming out event in Tokyo, but we did at the Tokyo Game Show. So, what's it like using the Vita TV? It's a lot like using a Vita, except even more comfortable. As expected, the Vita's UI is easier to control using a DualShock 3. Menus are a snap to navigate, and just as quick — not exactly a surprise given that, well, it's a Vita and it's a quick system. Just like we said at the announcement event, the unit itself is a pretty little thing. It's tiny and easily hidden away in a media center; not that you'd need to hide it away, given how sleek it is.

How do Vita games look? As it turns out, pretty good. Titles aren't quite as stunning as they look on the Vita's tighter OLED screen, but are attractive nonetheless. A few jagged edges were visible on some of the on-screen graphics, but quality didn't degrade too much between the Vita and TV screen. Also, unlike the new USB-powered PlayStation Vita refresh, the Vita TV version uses AC input.

**PRICE: 9,954 YEN (AROUND \$100)**

**AVAILABILITY: NOVEMBER 2013 (JAPAN)**

**THE BREAKDOWN:**  
PLAYSTATION'S \$100 MINI CONSOLE HOLDS MUCH PROMISE FOR VITA GAMES AND MORE IN THE LIVING ROOM.





# KINDLE FIRE HDX

**Amazon invited** us up to its HQ to show off the Kindle Fire HDX series — the company's latest premium tablets. The slate, like its predecessor, comes in 7- and 8.9-inch configurations — this time sporting much higher resolutions, with pixel densities rated at 323 pixels per inch (1,920 x 1,200) and 339 ppi (2,560 x 1,600), respectively. For by-the-pool readers, there's also a dynamic image contrast feature, which one exec pulled out a flashlight to demo. The feature works by shifting the display's contrast,

**PRICE: \$229-\$594**


**AVAILABILITY: OCTOBER 18TH (7-INCH) & NOVEMBER 8TH (8.9-INCH)**

**THE BREAKDOWN: AMAZON'S NEW KINDLE FIRES PACK QUITE THE SPEC PUNCH AS THEY TOE THE PREMIUM LINE.**

rather than brightness, to compensate for external changes in lighting.

The body of the tablet matches up with a number of those leaks we've seen trickling out over the past couple of weeks. It's a more angular thing, trading last year's rounded edges for slanting slopes on the rear. What the pictures didn't tell us, however, was just how light the 8.9-inch version is. It's nearly seven ounces (or 34 percent) lighter than its predecessor. As for cameras, the 7-incher only has the front-facing variety. The 8.9-incher's got two, including an 8-megapixel one on the back that shoots 1080p video.

These guys are quick, too. Both versions feature a 2.2GHz quad-core Snapdragon 800 processor and twice the RAM as the last version, bringing the total allotment to 2GB. The difference in gaming is far, far more pronounced. Battery-wise, Amazon promises 11 hours and up to 17 hours in a special reading mode.

The company's referred to the software internally as Fire OS for some time now, and has decided to let us in on the action for version 3.0, which carries the codename "Mojito." In a cute twist, it offers an alternative to Google's confectionary naming scheme, though if you were to dig far enough, you'd still find a Jelly Bean base here. The operating system maintains most of its predecessor's defining UI designs, and at the center, you'll find a river of apps, movies, games and the like, though now you can also opt for a more smartphone-esque grid version. 



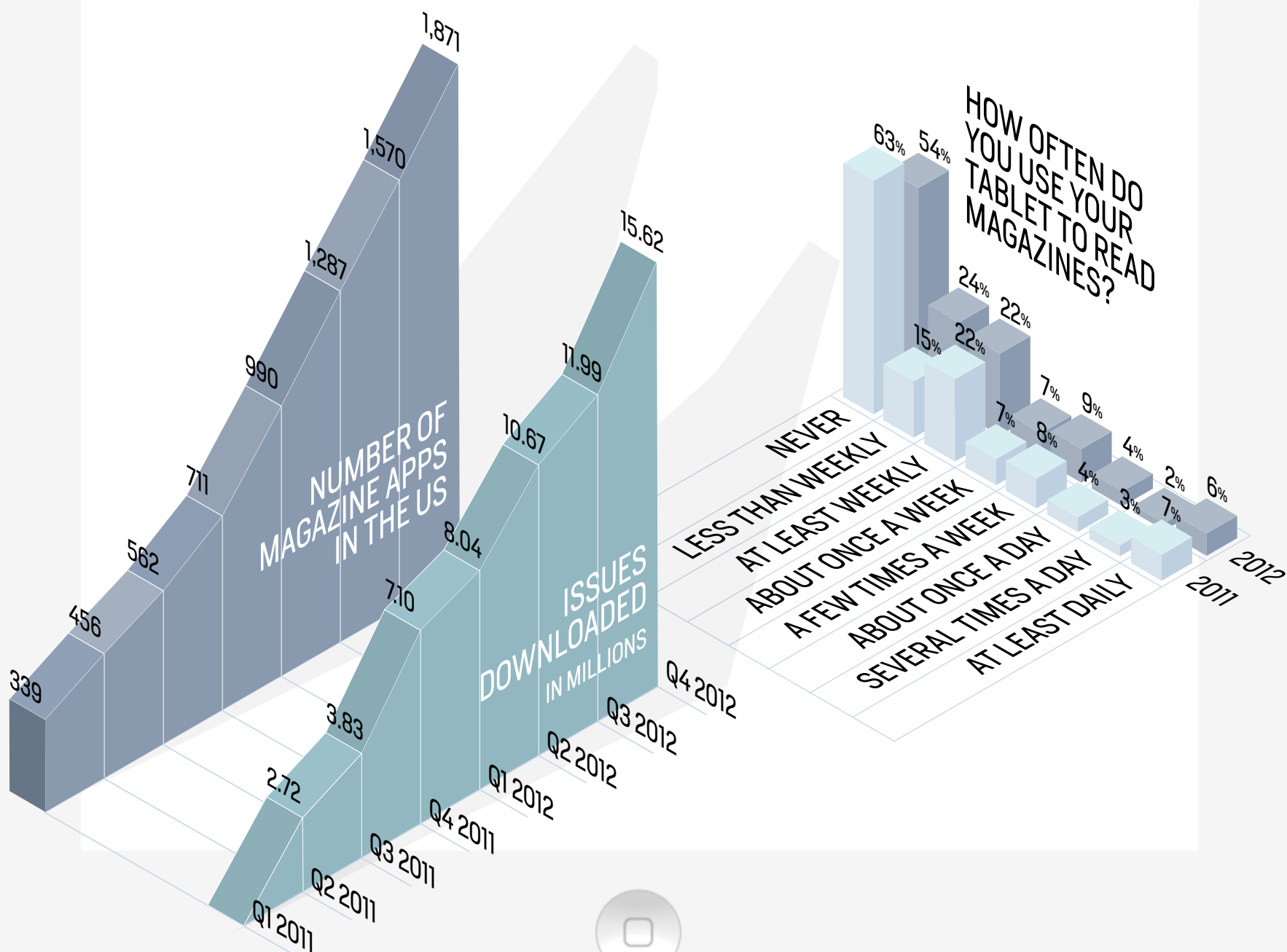
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# The Digital 'Zine Scene

**The physical magazine** format still persists, but its new digital counterpart has gained some ground over the past couple of years. According to analysts at iMonitor, the number of digital 'zines has skyrocketed from 339 in Q1 2011 to a whopping 1,871 in Q4 2012. The market's certainly not lacking content, but is the

magazine-reading public ready to lose its fly-whacking weapon of choice? According to data from Pew Research, 63 percent of those surveyed in 2011 hadn't touched a tablet-based magazine, and although that number dipped to 54 percent in 2012, the ultimate fate of the digital magazine is still uncertain. — *Jon Turi*







# Apple Chiefs Discuss Strategy, Market Share — and the New iPhones

By Sam Grobart  
*Bloomberg Businessweek*

**Apple went** on something of a PR offensive to coincide with the launch of the iPhone 5s and 5c last week, with some of its top execs granting some rare interviews and Tim Cook himself even joining Twitter. This interview for *Bloomberg Businessweek* saw Cook (along with Apple's Jonathan Ive and Craig Federighi) sit down for a fairly wide-ranging conversation with Sam Grobart, which offers a look at how Apple sees itself and the industry at large. That includes comments on Android, Microsoft and Nokia, the latter of which Cook cites as a cautionary tale, saying, "I think [Nokia] is a reminder to everyone in business that you have to keep innovating and that to not innovate is to die." For yet more from Cook, see the [full interview transcript](#) that *Businessweek* has also published.

## Dawn of a Revolution

By Walter Isaacson

*Harvard Gazette*

He wrote the book on Steve Jobs, and now Walter Isaacson has turned his attention to Bill Gates with this piece for the *Harvard Gazette* (and his forthcoming book focusing on the "great inventors of the digital age"). Not surprisingly, this one focuses on Gates' time at Harvard, where he was famously two semesters short of claiming a degree.

## Machine Language:

How Siri Found its Voice

By Lessley Anderson

*The Verge*

Lessley Anderson offers a look behind the scenes at the work that goes into computerized voices like Siri — much of which, of course, involves actual humans. As she explains, it's also a process that has come a long way in recent years, and one that still has plenty of room for improvement.

## Catching the Stars

By Lee Billings

*Aeon*

In this recent essay for *Aeon*, Lee Billings profiles the physicist and astronomer Roger Angel, who had a plan to build a "sunshade" in space to help cool the planet and has since turned his attention to another project here on Earth — one that he hopes will dramatically lower the cost of solar power.

## The Life and Death of Buran, the USSR Shuttle Built on Faulty Assumptions

By Amy Shira Teitel

*Ars Technica*

Amy Shira Teitel takes a look at a lesser-known part of space history: the USSR's own space shuttle, built in response to what it saw as a potential military threat from the US, and which would see only one test flight before the program was canceled soon after the fall of the Soviet Union.



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TAP TO CONTINUE.

# NEW TABLET, SAME PROBLEMS



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FORUM

EDITORIAL

BY DANIEL COOPER

**WHAT'S THE DEFINITION OF INSANITY?** Trying the same thing several times and expecting a different outcome. While we wouldn't suggest that Microsoft's finest minds are in need of urgent medical care, it does seem as if the company's executives have failed to heed the lessons doled out this summer. After all, it was only a few months ago that Microsoft had to admit that very few Surface RT tablets had been sold, and booked a \$900 million loss on inventory that remains rotting in warehouses.

At the launch of Microsoft's second Windows RT-running slate, Surface chief Panos Panay opened his remarks by say-

ing that the "Surface 2 is not subtle, but is a revamp. It is not the simple changes that everybody wants, but it's the changes people need." Unfortunately, the changes that he then went on to describe involved making the device thinner, faster and giving it a full-HD display — criticisms that few had leveled at the first generation of the hardware. No, the problems that every critic had were the limitations of the Surface's operating system: Windows RT. Not that you'd know it from this week's





event. In fact, Microsoft went out of its way to downplay the fact that the Surface 2 runs RT, mentioning the ambitious Windows-on-ARM project only three times in an hour. But why was the star of the show reduced to such a bit-part role?

## COMING TO THE SURFACE

It was 2011 when former Windows chief Steven Sinofsky told the world that Windows was coming to ARM-based hardware. Even though the company began sketching out ideas for Surface in 2009, before the advent of the iPad, with hindsight, it seemed a prescient move. Windows and Office, two of Microsoft's biggest cash generators, both ran almost exclusively on x86 systems — desktops and laptops — while ARM's low-power chips were beginning to Hoover-up the rapidly growing smartphone and tablet markets.

Unfortunately, there were a number of compromises that hobbled the new platform's chances before it was even completed. Back in 2011, Intel's Renee James admitted that Windows on ARM (as Windows RT was then called) wouldn't be able to run "legacy applications." In short, any program that ran on previous editions of Windows would have to be re-written from the ground up to work on the new architecture. Intel, understandably concerned about cutting itself out of the market, refused to offer emulation support for the new platform — but that meant consumers would have to buy new versions of any programs they wanted

to run on RT, assuming those programs were even available.

In June 2012, when Microsoft announced that it was creating its own hardware to accompany the operating system, the company's hardware partners instantly poured scorn upon the project. Acer's Linxian Lang said Microsoft would have to eat "hard rice" if it persisted with the plan. HP's Todd Bradley was skeptical, saying that he "wouldn't call [it] competition." While many interpreted his comments as a defensive response from an aggrieved hardware maker, it seems as if his prophecy came true. Acer originally planned to produce Windows RT hardware, but, along with Hewlett-Packard, pulled out in mid-2012. Even

**At the Surface's launch, Microsoft insisted that the tablets represented a pair of "no compromise" devices, but there was another "C" word that seemed to hang around the event: confusion.**



Apple CEO Tim Cook, who rarely criticizes other manufacturer's products by name, described the Surface as "compromised, confusing."

At the Surface's launch, Microsoft insisted that the tablets represented a pair of "no compromise" devices, but there was another "C" word that seemed to hang around the event: confusion. You see, the company had already used the Surface name on a range of touchscreen tables (since re-named PixelSense) and while it was releasing two tablets under this brand, the duo only behaved in the same way on the, ahem, surface.

Surface with Windows RT was powered by an ARM-based NVIDIA Tegra 3 T30 system-on-chip with 2GB RAM.

As we've already stated, this device ran Windows RT, which, although it looked and felt like Windows 8 — even down to the ability to run a traditional "desktop" mode — was entirely incapable of running legacy applications. This meant that previously owned editions of software wouldn't run, despite this appearing to operate like your average Windows 8 PC. While the Surface RT was launched on September 26th, 2012, its sibling wouldn't arrive on the scene until February 9th, 2013, nearly five months later. Though the Surface Pro looked like a slightly fatter Surface RT, it was built around an entirely different platform: an Intel Ivy Bridge Core i5-3317U running at 1.7GHz with 4GB



Microsoft's  
Panos Panay  
at the NYC  
Surface 2  
launch.





RAM and running Windows 8 — making it a full-fledged Windows device, capable of running all of the software the Surface RT couldn't. Price-wise, the Surface RT retailed for \$499 to \$699, while the Pro was marked up between \$899 and \$999. This time out, the company has sought to put clear blue water between the two models, with the Surface 2 launching for \$450, and the Pro 2 starting at \$899.

Despite the controversy, Microsoft did manage to convince some of its partners to produce hardware that ran its nascent platform. Samsung (ATIV Tab), Dell (XPS 10), ASUS (VivoTab RT) and Lenovo (Yoga 11) all contributed devices that ran Windows RT. Unfortunately for both Microsoft and its partners, when the gear made its public debut, reception was lukewarm and several manufacturers tried to put the genie back in the bottle. Samsung famously canceled the ATIV Tab's US launch, citing concerns that customers would be confused between Windows RT and Windows 8 — since both looked and operated the same way, yet were almost completely incompatible with each other. Of the others on that list, Dell's XPS 10 is no longer on sale, with ASUS taking a hit on unsold VivoTab RT units and Lenovo quietly retiring the Yoga 11 from its website.

## EATING HARD RICE

When the Surface RT launched, you could essentially give every review the

same précis. Critics adored the design and the look and feel of the hardware generally, and plenty of praise was deserved for its productivity improvements and the innovation that had gone into creating the Touch Cover. Unfortunately, the poor battery life, confusing app setup and lack of an ecosystem earned it strong enough demerits. Here are just a few choice cuts:

Paul Thurrott, *Supersite for Windows*: “Any excitement Microsoft generated around this launch will be squandered when people realize they just bought something that looks like Windows 8 but comes with even fewer apps than Windows Phone. That's not a recipe for success, it's a recipe for disaster.”

Tim Stevens, Engadget: “If gaming and music and movies and reading are what you're looking to enjoy, then we might advise sitting this one out for a few months.”

Walt Mossberg, *The Wall Street Journal*: “If you can live with its tiny number of third-party apps and somewhat disappointing battery life, it may give you the productivity some miss in other tablets.”

Nine months after launch, and with the Surface RT quickly becoming a singular product in the Windows RT market, Microsoft decided to slice \$150 from the price in the US and similar amounts elsewhere. Not even the Surface Pro, which shared little in the way of common features, was immune from the need for a price reduction, and Mi-



crosoft cut \$100 from its price just a month later.

In July 2013, a year and a month after Microsoft launched Surface RT, its quarterly financial report revealed that it wrote off \$900 million worth of inventory. More than a week later, SEC filings showed that both versions of Surface brought in \$853 million — less than the \$898 million that the company spent on advertising the platform. Microsoft has yet to announce how many Surface units it sold, but simple long division — assuming customers only ever bought the \$499 base model — shows that, over the course of a year, it sold a paltry 1.7 million Surface devices. By way of comparison, Apple sold 14.6 million iPads in the third quarter of 2013 alone.

Analysts like Patrick Moorhead believed that this loss was the final straw for Microsoft's senior figures, who demanded Steve Ballmer take the fall for the project's failure. While the CEO is unlikely to ever openly comment on the decision, his public remarks in the press release announcing his retirement do offer some hint as to his thinking:

“My original thoughts on timing would have had my retirement happen in the middle of our company's transformation to a devices and services company.”

Naturally, as that transformation would have taken several years, we can take this to mean that he was pushed by a board at the end of its tether. Then

**Microsoft may define the new hardware as a “revamp,” but in real terms, this is the sort of spec-bump you would likely expect from any annual tablet refresh.**

there's a rumored quote taken from an internal “town hall” meeting, where the executive reportedly said that he had “overestimated” demand for Windows RT tablets.

This week, of course, was the launch of the Surface 2. In the new product lineup, Microsoft is keeping the Surface RT around as an entry-level option, so it's easy to compare the first generation of the device alongside its sequel. Microsoft may define the new hardware as a “revamp,” but in real terms, this is the sort of spec-bump you would likely expect from any annual tablet refresh. That means that the Tegra 3 of 2012 has been replaced with Tegra 4; the USB port has been upgraded to 3.0; and the 10.6-inch display is now full HD. The cameras have also been tweaked, with a 3.5-megapixel front-facer complementing the 5-megapixel primary unit. Oh, and, as with last year, the device also comes pre-loaded with Office RT.



## HAMPERED BY HASWELL


In many ways, Intel's stumbles in the portable market were among the reasons behind the genesis of Windows RT. The chip maker wasn't able to blend performance and power for its mobile offerings, typified by the Surface Pro's sub-four-hour battery life. Microsoft, therefore, needed a long-life and low-power offering to help bolster its range.

Unfortunately, by the time that Surface RT had launched, Intel was on the cusp of turning itself around. It had its Atom-branded Clover Trail processors, offering full Windows 8 in relatively cheap and low-power (sub-3W) hybrids. Crucially, it also had Haswell — a full-fat chip that managed to reduce power consumption to beneath 15W, with laptops like the MacBook Air and Sony VAIO Duo 13 getting nearly 13 and 10 hours of battery life, respectively. These systems, capable of running fully featured operating systems, essentially rendered the notion of a crippled, tablet-only version of Windows obsolete in a heartbeat. Intel's next advance, Bay Trail, the successor to Clover Trail, can only make things worse for RT.

Lenovo, a company that had supported RT by producing the Yoga 11, neglected to refresh the device at its September press event. Naturally, an inquiring audience member asked if we would see the company create a second Windows RT device and marketing manager Nick Reynolds' response was telling. He said that with the advent of Haswell, the old compromise between power and performance was moot —

and, by implication, that we'd probably not see any more Windows RT devices from the company in the near future.

Now that the Surface Pro 2 has Intel's Haswell technology on board, promising 75 percent better battery life, the presence of Windows RT 8.1 on the Surface 2 seems like an aberration. Yes, the Surface 2 may run "100,000" apps available in the Windows Store, but if you purchased a new x86 copy of Photoshop even a year or two ago, it won't run on this device. One of the problems with the first generation of Surface tablets was that people reportedly stayed away from the platform purely because there was an uncertainty surrounding app compatibility. By way of comparison, there are around 275,000 iPad-only apps and an unspecified number of tablet-optimized Android apps, believed to be around 60 percent of the nearly 900,000 available — giving a ballpark figure of 540,000. Combining a smaller app selection and no legacy support (despite the confusing presence of a desktop mode that could dupe many into believing that this is a full-fat Windows 8 device) means that there is still uncertainty here.

While Microsoft has hoped that a small price cut and improved specifications will dazzle the market, the gnawing hole at the heart of Windows RT remains. With no other manufacturer, as yet, on-board to produce new Windows RT hardware, Microsoft will have to plough this furrow alone — and judging by what has happened over the past year, we're not sure it's capable of engineering a turnaround. 





# THE WHY OF THE 'i' BUY

DISTRO  
09.27.13

FORUM

SWITCHED  
ON

BY ROSS RUBIN

**FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS**, the media has met iPhone introductions with skepticism that precedes great sales success. This has become such a cliché that the superstitious might worry what would happen should new iPhones be introduced to universal praise. But there was no cause for worry as far as the iPhone 5c and 5s were concerned. In the weekend following their initial availability, Apple reported that it sold 9 million iPhones, which set a new record for the company.

Two of the reasons behind this success likely had less to do with the strength of the product per se, at least in the US. This marked the first time that new iPhones had been available on all four major US carriers — a significant shift from the product's first years as an AT&T exclusive. In fact, T-Mobile, the newest carrier to participate in an iPhone debut, has been particularly aggressive about promoting its Jump service that encourages upgrades, and its competitors have introduced their own upgrade-facilitation programs that

grease the upgrade wheels for Apple and others.

Outside of T-Mobile, there is a larger base of in-contract iPhone users ready to upgrade; in what can be called the momentum effect. These include many relative newcomers to the platform from Sprint. But even at AT&T and Verizon, there are more iPhone 4 and 4s users skipping a generation to upgrade to the iPhone 5s than there were iPhone 3G and 3GS users looking to skip a generation and upgrade to the iPhone 5. With the




“The colors of the 5c reflect an oft-requested feature of the iPhone line, one that the company used throughout its flash-based iPod assortment and even the early CRT-based iMacs of the late 1990s.”

strongest and deepest assortment of apps and users who invest the most in them, Apple has the highest switching cost to another platform.

That said, the iPhone 5c and 5s hold different appeals and, with more dramatic product line segmentation than we've seen in the past, hold different value to Apple. The colors of the 5c reflect an oft-requested feature of the iPhone line, one that the company used throughout its flash-based iPod assortment and even the early CRT-based polycarbonate iMacs of the late 1990s.

Jaded geeks may call the colors a sign of a maturing product line and scoff that personalization has been available via an endless array of iPhone cases in the past. However, particularly for newcomers to the platform, it adds

a dimension that hasn't been available in the platform before. Indeed, the appeal of different colors in a phone goes back at least to Nokia's 6100 feature phones. However, as smartphone penetration has grown in the US, it's a way to differentiate that has been used in Nokia's Lumias, HTC's One and, to an extreme, in the Moto X.

Still, while the iPhone 5c may be little more than an iPhone 5 in new, brighter clothing, most of those upgraders accustomed to a \$200 price for a flagship will be attracted to the iPhone 5s. The next Switched On will address how the components of that handset combine to create something old iPhone hands will appreciate, as well as a few areas where competitors are leading the way. 





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# REVIEW

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## JAWBONE MINI JAMBOX



Jawbone's new **Mini Jambox** slims down to increase portability, but does the boom suffer in a box this size?  
**By Joe Pollicino**

**Jawbone's original Jambox** made Bluetooth portable speakers a mass-market hit. Since then, though, Jawbone has started to lag behind as other companies have come out with better units that cost either the same price or less. Now, the \$180 Mini Jambox is here with an even more portable design to help Jawbone keep its edge. Now that we've gotten the chance to live with it for a few weeks, it's time to answer the big questions you might have before placing a pre-order. Does the Mini Jambox offer marked improvements over the original? Is it enough to





compete with all the other options in this space? And, most importantly, is the price right? Read on for the Engadget take.

## HARDWARE

The Mini Jambox is what it sounds like: a Jambox, made smaller. Yves Béhar was yet again put in charge of the design, which maintains the same boxy shape and wavy speaker grille we've already grown accustomed to. The Mini comes clad in a rigid anodized-aluminum case, with strips of rubber at the sides that roll under the bottom edges to act as feet. Sadly, there's no way to angle the speaker or let the drivers face vertically for situations when you can't

## The Mini Jambox is what it sounds like: a Jambox, made smaller.

have it positioned in front of you. All told, it's available in nine colors, with five different grille textures. Our unit is the new take on the original "Red Dot" variation, which Jawbone has been shipping since the very beginning.

On top, you'll notice volume keys and a multi-purpose button (play, pause, Siri / Google Now). The right side, meanwhile, houses a microphone, a pairing button, a micro-USB port (for charging and

The slimmer Mini nearly fits comfortably in-pocket.





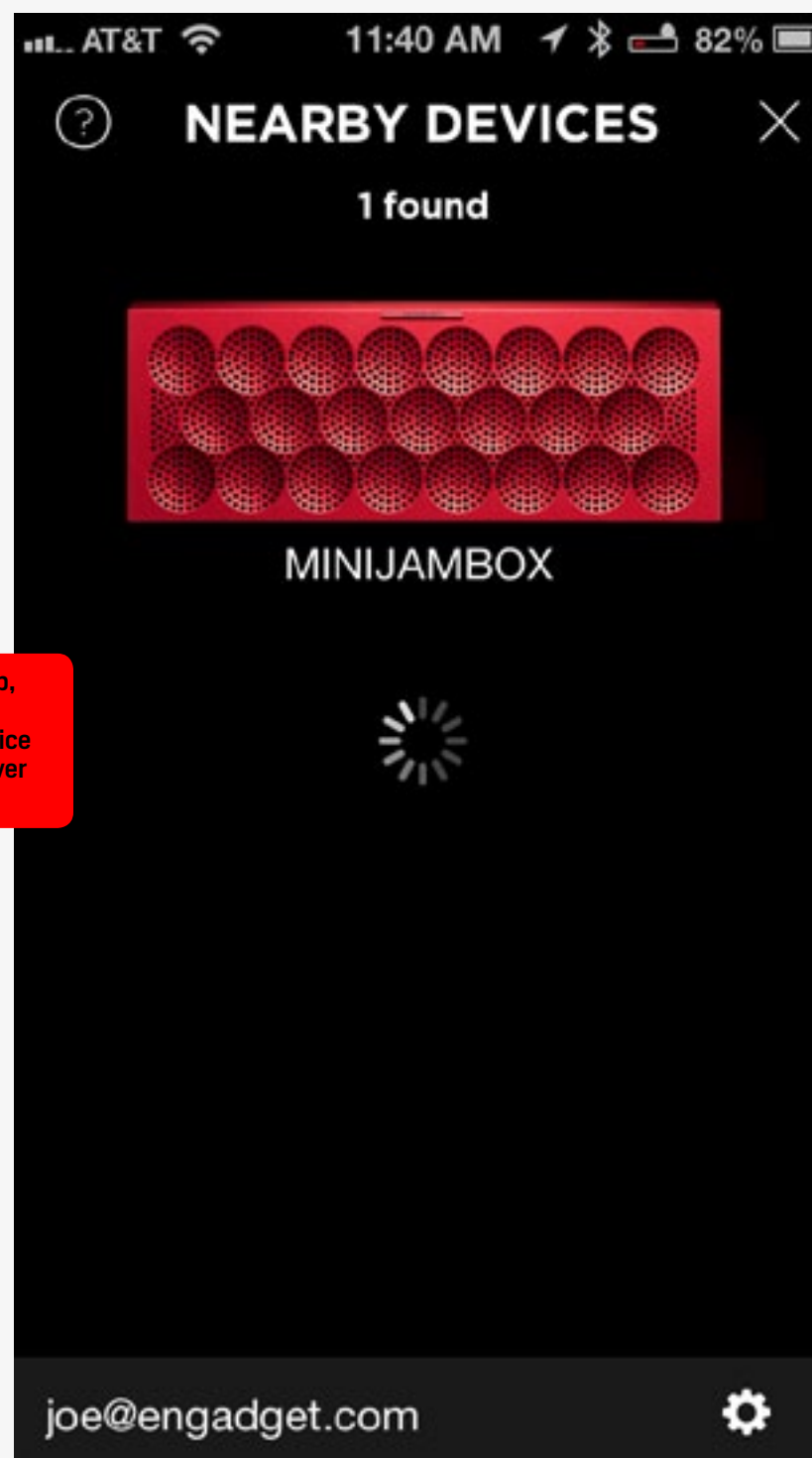
updates), a 3.5mm auxiliary input and a glowing power button. Speaking of the sort, every button offers a pleasing amount of tactile feedback, without being too “clicky.” In the box, you’ll find both 3.5mm audio and micro-USB cables, but the smaller size means a wall wart is now an extra \$30. While we’re on the subject of things you lose on this smaller model, the Mini is rated for 10 hours of battery life, down from 15 on the original. Don’t worry, though: it was still enough keep us away from the power outlet for a few days.

So, just how tiny is it compared to the original? The key difference is the thickness. The Mini comes in at 6.06 inches in length, 0.96 inch in width, 2.28 inches in height and weighs nine ounces, while the Jambox is 5.95 inches in length, 2.24 inches in width and 1.57 inches in height and weighs 12 ounces. Basically, the Mini will fit in your pants pocket — even if you’re wearing skinny jeans. Still, the 90-degree edges make it quite annoying in that particular scenario, despite Jawbone’s suggestions to the contrary. Yes, it’s a much smaller speaker, but unless you’re wearing cargo pants, you’ll want to toss it in your bag. Chop off another quarter of the thickness or taper the edges in a future model, and the pocket thing could be more realistic.

## SETUP

Getting the unit to work with our devices was incredibly easy. When you power

it up, you’ll be greeted by a new take on the familiar *boom* and *beep* (there’s a double *beep* when turning it off), which changes to a voice prompt that lets you know it’s time to pair on your first go. The speaker handles two simultaneous connections at a time over a Bluetooth 4.0 Low Energy connection. From there, it’s just like syncing up any other Bluetooth device. And on iOS, you’ll see the nifty battery meter appear in your info bar too.

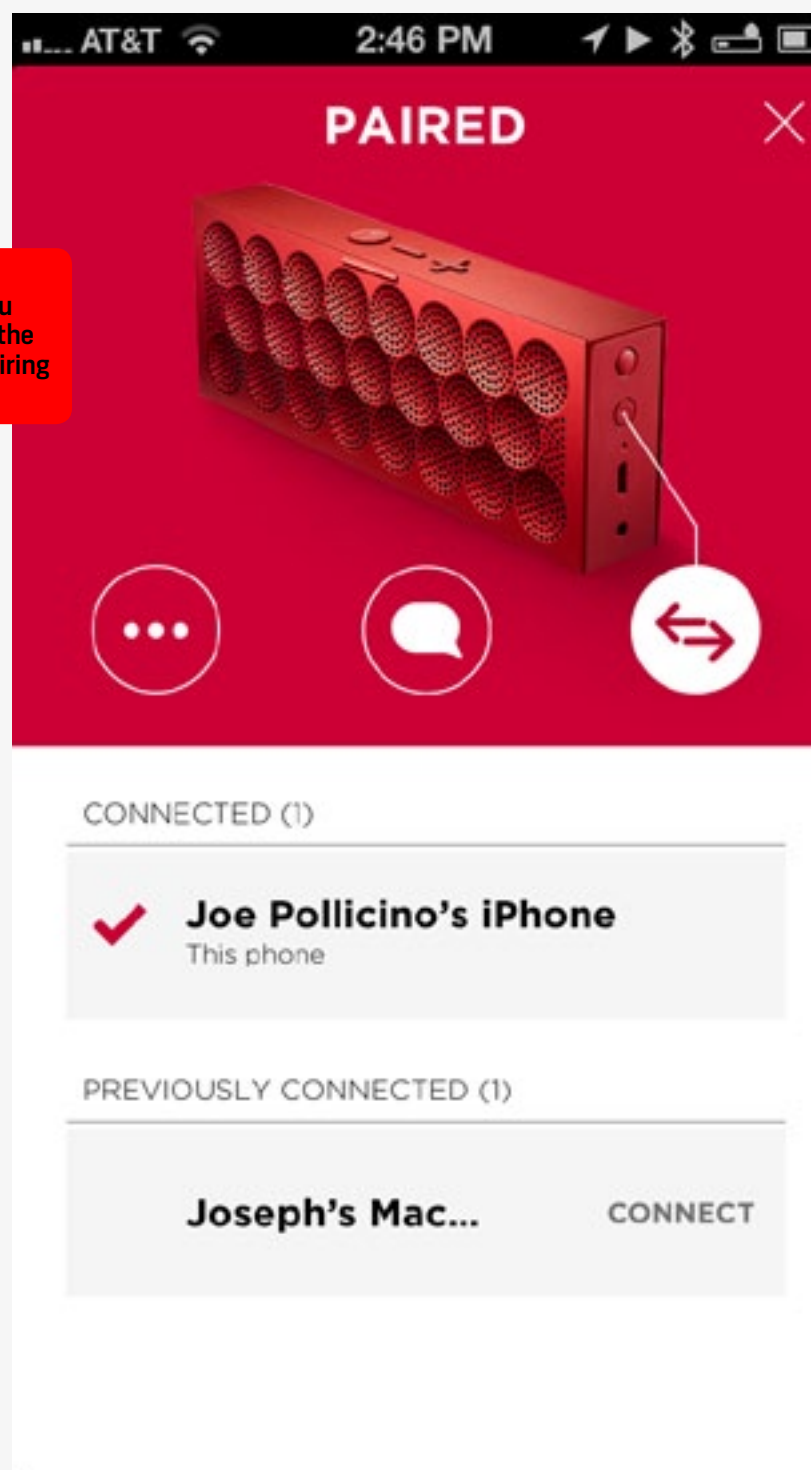
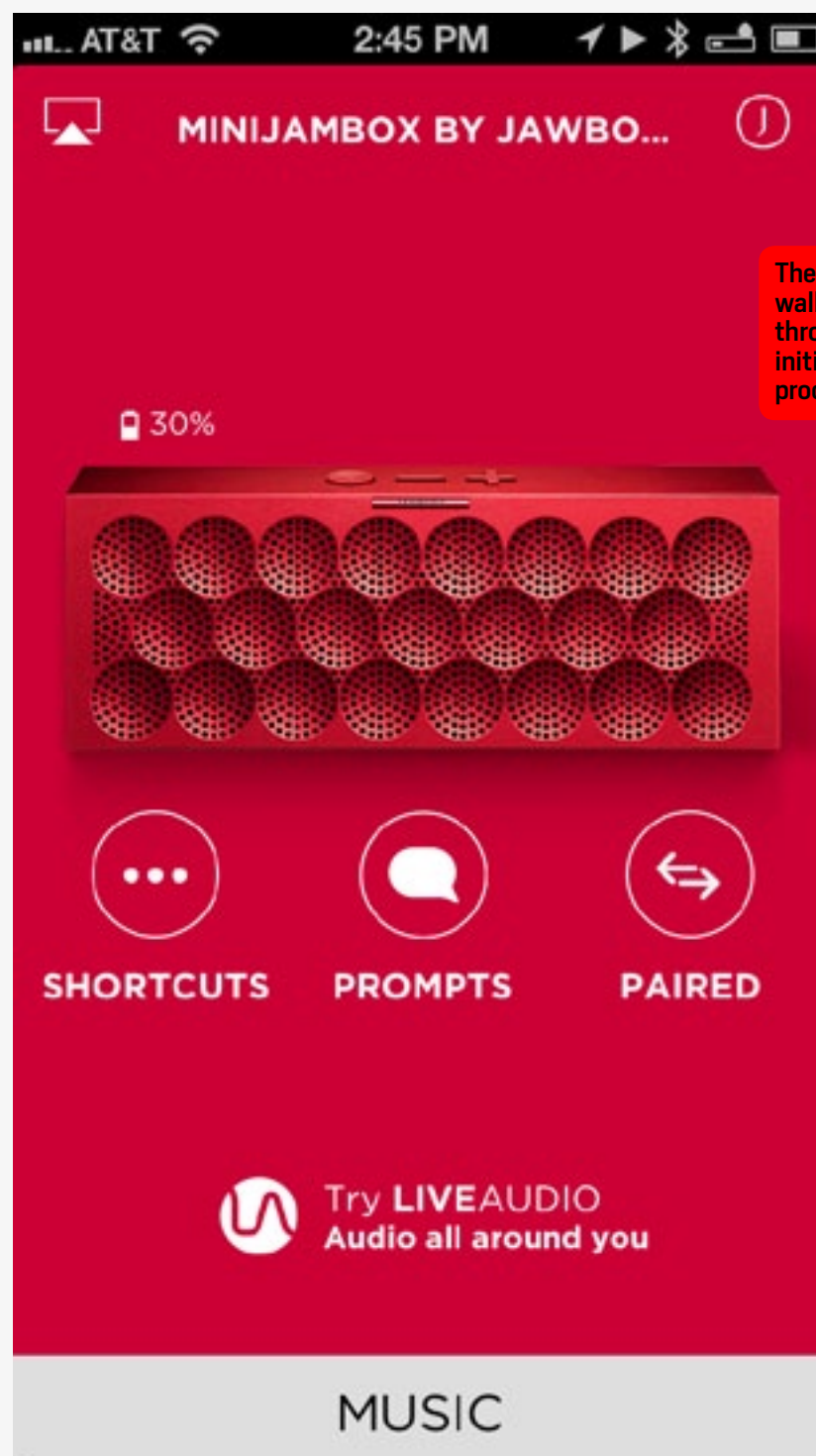


## JAWBONE APP

In addition to announcing the Mini Jambox, Jawbone introduced new apps for both iOS and Android. As before, you can use the MyTalk settings to make adjustments to the device itself, but it also adds a music player, which you can use to play locally stored iTunes music or stream from Spotify or Rdio. (More apps will be added at a later date, Jawbone says.) Unfortunately, though you can play locally stored mu-

sic on either app, the streaming functionality only works on iOS for now. Sorry, folks! That disclaimer aside, the app works fluidly, but it isn't any more appealing than using other music apps.

With that out of the way, let's talk about the rest of what the app has to offer. For starters, you'll have to log in on first use to register the device. Once you're in, you'll see options to change or turn off audio prompts (unfortunately, there's no way to select specific



ones), along with a guided Bluetooth setup with a cheat sheet for all the button shortcuts. Throughout, the layout of the app is extremely easy to navigate and will match up with the color of your speaker.

Updating the Mini with new firmware and features, however, is an annoying process. You'll find options to "install" different voices, languages and LiveAudio, but clicking these simply directs you to plug in your device and visit Jawbone's website. That said, LiveAudio doesn't come pre-installed on the Mini, like it did on the Big Jambox, so you'll need to download it. After logging in with your credentials, you'll need to install an updater onto your Windows or Mac machine, which merely stays active in the background. With the updater running and your Mini plugged into a USB port, you'll be able to *finally* update it through the website. We seriously hope that we'll one day be able to do all that from within the application. For what's it worth, we were able to carry out this process without any hiccups. You know, save for the fact that it can take up to five — 56k modem-like — minutes for any changes to apply while using the web interface.

## SOUND

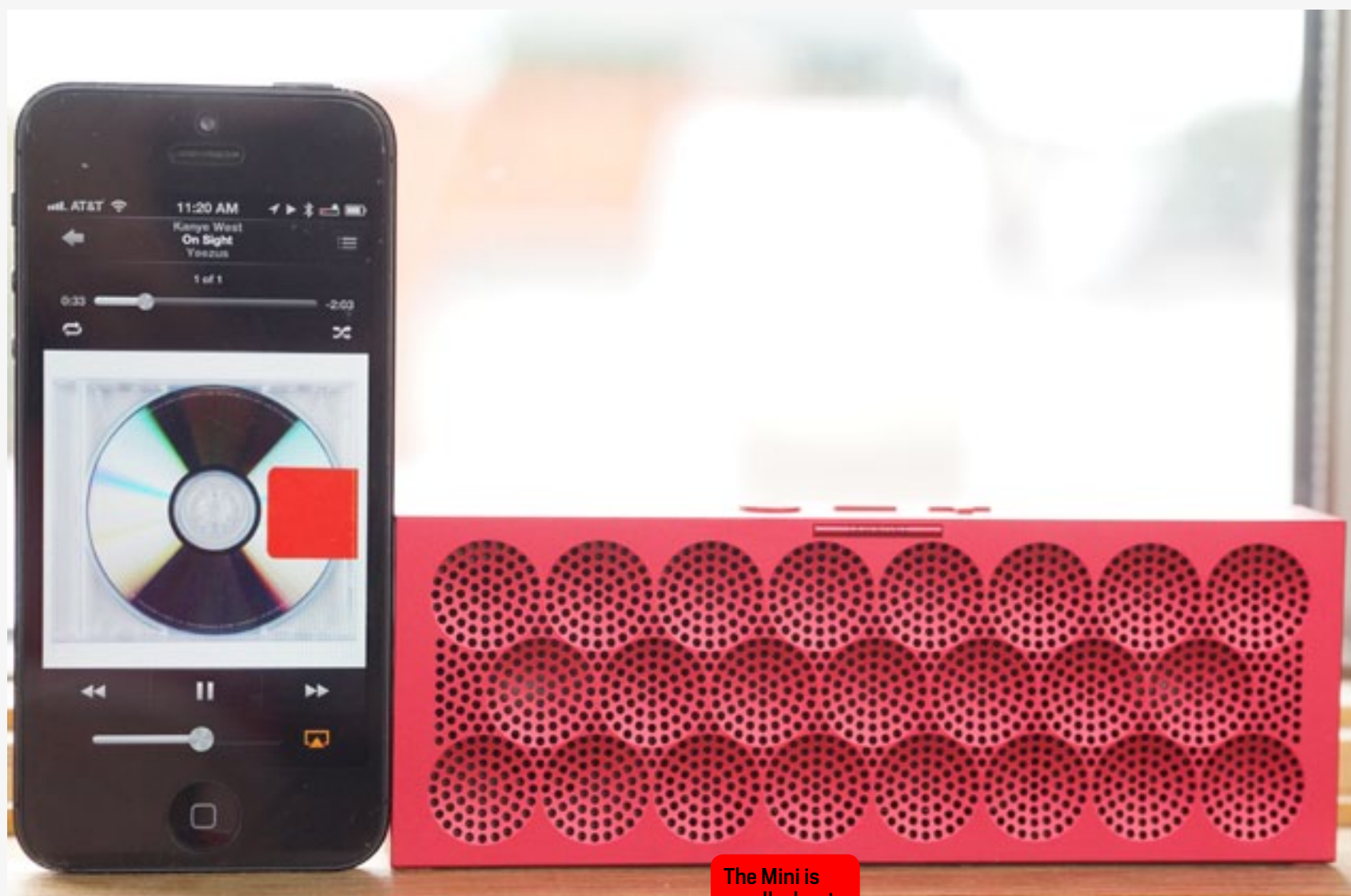
For its time, the Jambox was an impressive piece of kit. But now we've got lots of similar options, such as the UE Mobile Boombox, which easily bests the original Jambox in terms

of audio quality. The biggest problem we've found with that older model is its tendency to become distorted at any reasonable volume level. We're happy to report, though, that performance is much improved in the Mini. All throughout the range of volume, its two drivers and passive bass radiator pushed out much smoother sonic waves. There was no major distortion from the aggressive samples on *Yeezus* to the heaviest of Jimmy Eat World tracks. It does feel slightly compressed and veiled with noticeable limiting, though. This is likely thanks to a loudness-compensation algorithm, compression and Jawbone's own EQ, which seem to work more aggressively here than on the Big Jambox; you can't get this unit to distort because it won't even get loud enough to.

The Mini impresses initially with a healthy amount of thump, but this means the drivers can't pierce through noise pollution like SOL Republic's \$200 Deck, which has an outdoor mode. There is a LiveAudio setting on the Jawbone Mini (enabled within the app or by holding both volume buttons), but it merely serves to provide a "3D" sound. It's a decent little option for widening the soundstage, but usually it makes a negligible difference — just like on the Big Jambox. We'd also be remiss not to point out that the \$200 Beats Pill goes a few notches louder and sounds noticeably clearer, but the Mini Jam-







box balances this out by maintaining a much more consistent wireless connection. Granted, the speakers we've mentioned have bigger dimensions, but they'll all fit in a jacket pocket when it comes down to it. On the opposite end, this puppy easily outclasses the UE Mobile Boombox, which has been besting the OG for a while.

For all the improvements Jawbone's made in the audio department, the Mini

**It's just not loud enough for use in areas with moderate ambient noise.**

The Mini is small, about the size of an ice cream sandwich.

still suffers from the same fatal flaw as its predecessor: it's just not loud enough for use in areas with moderate ambient noise. We can't shake the feeling that a louder volume output from the size of the original Jambox would have been more useful than sizing everything down. Make no mistake, though, the level of volume and clarity the Mini outputs is still very impressive for a speaker this size.

Finally, a note about that speakerphone functionality: I found myself frustrated with calls. No one ever complained about clarity, but there were usually complaints about my voice not coming through loud enough unless I was seated in front of the speaker.



## WRAP-UP

We're smitten with the Mini Jambox's colorful styling and well-constructed casing, not to mention the improved app, but it mainly seems to raise the bar within Jawbone's own product lineup. It's hard to justify the \$180 price if loudness is a concern, especially with competing products from SOL Republic, Logitech and Beats priced about the same, or even cheaper. That said, the price is right if you're interested in what the Mini Jambox has to offer — namely, a stylish, well-built Bluetooth speaker with extended app functionality. Whether or not you're sold, don't even think about getting the

As with other Jamboxes, the design is influenced by geometry.



regular Jambox instead of this: the Mini is a clear improvement over the original for the same price. **D**

---

*The impossibly clumsy, overly analytical Associate Editor at Engadget. Joe's functionally useless without his glasses — a fact you really shouldn't disclose to any enemies.*

## BOTTOMLINE

### JAWBONE MINI JAMBOX

# \$180



#### PROS

- Elegant design
- Sturdy build quality
- Impressive battery life
- Improved Jawbone app works with Spotify, Rdio and iTunes

#### CONS

- Limited volume
- Annoying firmware update process
- Overall package trails some competitors

#### BOTTOMLINE

The Mini might not be for everyone, but at the very least it's a clear improvement over the original Jambox for the same price.





## HP SLATEBOOK X2



With the **SlateBook x2**, HP looks to offer its own 10-inch dockable Android productivity slate  
**By Dana Wollman**

**Until now**, ASUS hasn't had much competition in dockable Android tablets. Sure, we've seen the odd model from Lenovo and other companies, but for the most part, "Transformer" has become one of those words like "Kleenex" — you know, the kind that refers just as much to a category as a specific brand. Nonetheless, HP is throwing its hat in the ring. The SlateBook x2, only the company's second Android tablet, is a 10-inch slate that competes on price as much as performance. For \$480, the keyboard dock comes included, and the tablet itself boasts some





top-notch specs, including a 1,920 x 1,080 screen and a Tegra 4 processor. And, of course, in addition to being a keyboard, that dock has a built-in battery of its own, promising to extend the total runtime to up to 12.5 hours. So is it good enough that you'll remember not to call it a Transformer?

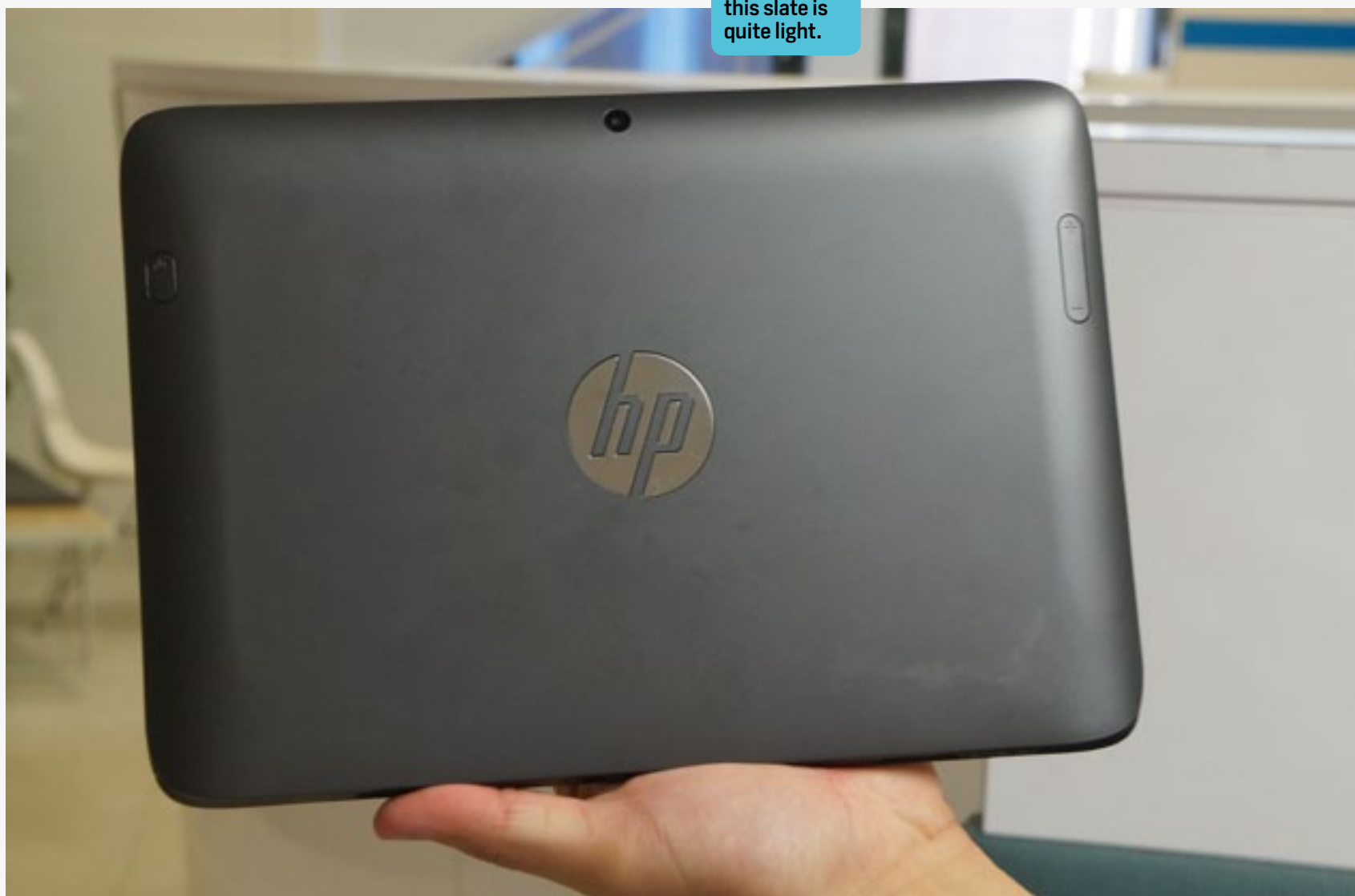
## HARDWARE

With a matte plastic lid, done up in a serious gray color, it would be easy to dismiss the SlateBook x2 as bland. In fact, the SlateBook is memorable, mostly because it's one of the lightest tablets we've ever handled. At 1.34 pounds for the slate alone, it's lighter than both the current iPad (1.44 pounds), as

well as the Toshiba Excite Pro, which weighs a similar 1.39. As you'd expect, then, that makes it easy to hold aloft for an extended period of time, not that you'll need to if you make use of that keyboard dock. Even with the base attached, the whole thing weighs in at 2.8 pounds, making it slightly lighter than a similarly sized laptop, even HP's own Pavilion TouchSmart 11. What's nice, too, is that the center of gravity here is in the heavier dock piece, so not only is the tablet light, but it also never tips over backward when you're working with it in your lap.

That one winning quality aside, though, this is a design with problems. For starters, while

Despite a rather ho-hum shell, this slate is quite light.



the plastic finish does a good job resisting scratches, it manages to show a good deal of fingerprints, despite the fact that it doesn't have a glossy surface. Ditto for the shiny metal logo on the rear cover, which is also ripe for grease stains. We're sure it was meant as a premium touch (metal accents usually are), but more than anything it just looks out of place.

Worse, HP hid the most important buttons! Both the power button and volume rocker are located on the back side of the device, each flush with the lid so that even if you know what general area they're in, they can still be difficult to find by feel. Even after weeks with the device, I was more likely to flip the tablet over and press the power / lock button than successfully hit it with my finger. Which gets pretty old after you've accidentally let the tablet go to sleep for the umpteenth time.

Since HP designed the SlateBook so that there are barely any defined edges — just gently sloping curves — the company's design team had to put all the ports on the bottom side, the one that fits into the keyboard dock. There, you'll find a headphone jack, a proprietary charging port and an exposed microSD slot to augment the 16GB of built-in storage. Of course, you've also got a pair of cameras, including a 720p front-facing webcam and a fairly wimpy 2-megapixel rear shooter (no LED flash). That about covers the tablet itself, but because this is meant to be used in laptop mode some of the time,

you'll also find a handful of ports on the accompanying keyboard dock. These include a USB socket, additional headphone jack, HDMI-out, a full-sized SD card reader and another charging port — the same kind of proprietary socket featured on the tablet itself.

## KEYBOARD DOCK

Maybe it's because we've tested one too many Transformer tablets, but we were sure the SlateBook's keyboard dock was going to be cramped, flimsy and a pain to type on. It seems, though, that our fears were unfounded. After many years of cramming nearly full-sized keyboards into tiny laptops (see: the Pavilion dmlz), HP is bringing that same formula over to its new Android tablet. Though the keys here don't necessarily offer more travel than what you'll get on an ASUS Transformer, the underlying panel is sturdier, allowing it to stand up to more insistent typing. Also, considering this isn't quite a full-sized layout, the buttons are well-spaced and generously sized. In fact, yours truly rarely made typos while responding to emails, browsing Chrome or even writing this review.

Pairing a trackpad with an Android tablet is a funny thing. On the one hand, Android wasn't designed to be used with a mouse and keyboard. On the other, once you've gotten used to typing on a keyboard dock, it can feel cumbersome to lift your hand away from the keys to scroll through a web-





Trackpad issues forced old-fashioned swipes.

page or hit the little refresh icon. Basically, if you've already settled into a typing groove, it's only natural to want to throw in a two-finger scroll. As it happens, the trackpad here is responsive enough that you *could* page up and down without having to take your hands far from the keyboard. It's a finicky setup, though, and more than once, we gave up and swiped the touchscreen instead. On the plus side, the touchpad's surface area is larger than we would have asked for, and the Android hotkeys (home, back, search, volume controls, et cetera) should be indispensable to anyone already used to keyboard shortcuts on their regular laptop.

## DISPLAY AND SOUND

We'd be lying if we said full HD resolution was a standard feature for tablets, but at least with the expensive models, you're more or less in the clear. For the money, the SlateBook x2 offers a 10.1-inch, 1,920 x 1,080 display. Despite having an IPS panel, the viewing angles are a bit narrow, though we suspect that has more to do with a low brightness rating than a failure of the IPS technology. To be fair, too, we only first noticed the limited viewing angles when we played a movie with the tablet lying face-up on a table. And honestly, that's mainly a scenario for us reviewers (we do have to test the battery life without the dock, after all).







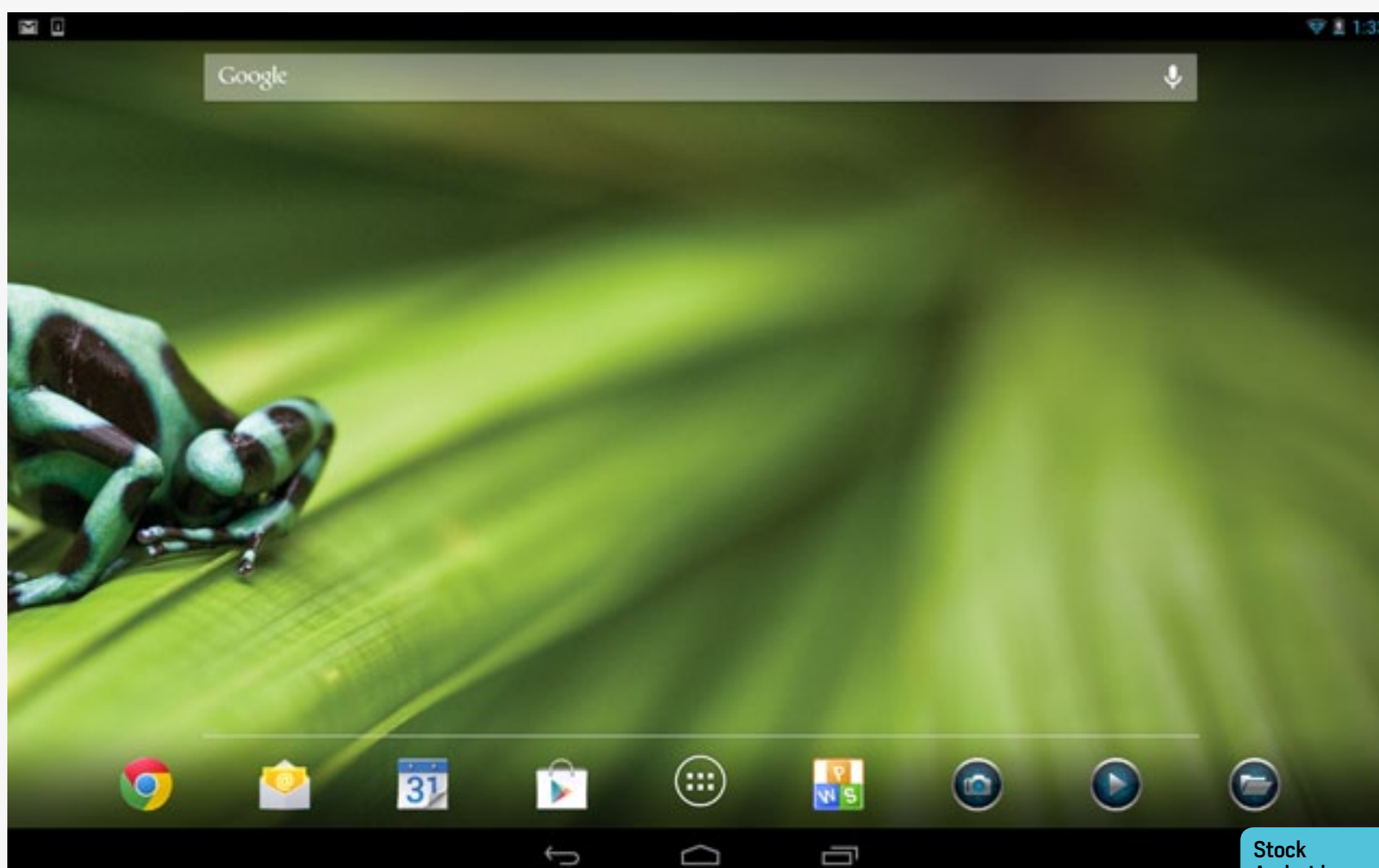
Brightness  
woes mean  
limited  
viewing  
angles here.

Because this thing comes with a keyboard, we can't imagine why you'd want to watch a movie with the tablet lying flat — not unless you forgot the dock at home, anyway. Once you've put the tablet in the dock, you can adjust the screen angle, so chances are good you'll find a sweet spot where the colors are bright and the contrast is balanced. (Psst: Head-on is a safe bet.)

To its credit, HP put the two speakers on the tablet's front face, so that the sound is always firing toward you. Still, even ideal speaker placement doesn't do much to improve the

audio quality. For one thing, the volume here is pretty low. So low, in fact, that we wondered at first if perhaps the quality itself would be decent (oftentimes, devices with weaker sound exhibit less distortion and tinniness). Here, though, the sound is both low and tinny — basically, the worst of both worlds. What's interesting, too, is that HP went with DTS Sound+ on this one, as opposed to Beats, with which it has a very strong and, uh, *colorful* partnership. As much as we mock HP's red-and-black Beats-branded PCs, that may have been a welcome feature here.





## SOFTWARE

HP only recently re-entered the tablet market, and while it hasn't always gotten the hardware right, it's done the smart thing in sticking with unskinned Android (version 4.2.2, in this case). Even the list of preinstalled apps is fairly light. On board, we have: Box, Evernote, Kingsoft Office, Skitch, Splashtop and TegraZone, for finding Tegra-optimized games.

Really, most of the non-stock apps here are from HP itself, including Printer Control, ePrint, HP File Manager, HP Media Player and HP Camera. The media player allows for playback of music, photos and videos, with an option to stream content to a Miracast-certified display. You can also capture photos or

video from within the Media Player app, in the event watching someone else's work inspires you to make something of your own. (OK, maybe that's a stretch.) At any rate, you'll find shortcuts on the home screen for HP's camera, media player and file manager, but you can remove all of them with a long-press, the same way you'd get rid of any other shortcut.

Like most other consumer electronics, the SlateBook x2 comes with a one-year warranty, including 24/7 phone support.

## PERFORMANCE AND BATTERY LIFE

The SlateBook x2 is only the second tablet we've tested with a Tegra 4 processor inside, but we're already well convinced of the chip's immense performance po-

Stock Android packs a few HP add-ons too.



BENCHMARKS	HP SLATEBOOK X2	TOSHIBA EXCITE WRITE	SONY XPERIA TABLET Z
QUADRANT (V2)	13,660	12,272	7,434
VELLAMO (V2.0 HTML5)	3,237	2,362	2,242
ANTUTU	26,874	26,696	20,263
SUNSPIDER 0.9.1 (MS)	654	851	1,382
CF-BENCH	32,725	28,330	17,790

SUNSPIDER: LOWER SCORES ARE BETTER.

tential. As you can see in the table above, Tegra 4 helps both the x2 and the Toshiba Excite Write sail past the Xperia Tablet Z (and its quad-core Snapdragon S4 Pro chipset) in benchmark tests. But the SlateBook beats the Write in every test (sometimes by a big margin), despite the fact that they have the same Tegra 4 chip and 2GB of RAM.

We're still not sure that means the SlateBook is exceptional for a Tegra 4 tablet — we already had some misgivings about the Write's uneven performance — but in a way, it doesn't matter: the x2 is fast and reliable. Transitions are smooth and apps are quick to open. We also had no problem juggling between Gmail, several open tabs in Chrome and other miscellaneous apps, including Facebook, Twitter and a third-party media player.

As for gaming, it was smooth sailing in *Fractal Combat*, where we were able to fly our plane upside down and then flip it over again, all without any stuttering. If there's one downside to the performance,

it's that the rear casing on the tablet can get warm (not hot, but warm) without much provocation. That'll be a moot point if you're using it in laptop mode, though you might notice your fingers getting a bit toasty if you're cradling the device in your hands. Again, though, it never gets pants-scorchingly hot, so you shouldn't have to adjust your usage habits much, if at all.

HP claims that with the dock attached, the tablet can last up to 12.5 hours. That's a best-case scenario, of course — one we weren't able to replicate. In our admittedly taxing rundown test, which involves looping a video off local storage with WiFi on and the brightness fixed at 50 percent, the tablet itself lasted just six hours and 34 minutes — that's almost five hours less than the current iPad, and three hours less than ASUS' Transformer Pad Infinity. Even the Nexus 10, which we faulted for so-so battery life, lasted about an hour longer in the same test.





TABLET	BATTERY LIFE
HP SLATEBOOK X2	6:34 (TABLET ONLY) / 8:49 (KEYBOARD DOCK)
APPLE iPad MINI	12:43 (WIFI)
APPLE iPad (LATE 2012)	11:08 (WIFI)
APPLE iPad 2	10:26
ASUS EEE PAD TRANSFORMER PRIME	10:17
APPLE iPad (2012)	9:52 (HSPA) / 9:37 (LTE)
NEXUS 7 (2012)	9:49
MICROSOFT SURFACE FOR WINDOWS RT	9:36
APPLE iPad	9:33
ASUS TRANSFORMER PRIME INFINITY TF700	9:25
SAMSUNG GALAXY TAB 2 10.1	8:56
SONY XPERIA TABLET Z	8:40
HISENSE SERO 7 PRO	8:28
TOSHIBA EXCITE WRITE	8:13
LENOVO IDEATAB S2110	8:07
GALAXY TAB 2 7.0	7:38
HP SLATE 7	7:36
NEXUS 10	7:26

Unfortunately, considering how heavy the dock is (1.46 pounds), it doesn't boost battery life nearly the way we expected it to. With the dock attached, we got an extra two hours and 15 minutes of runtime, bringing the total to eight hours and 49 minutes. All told, that's a respectable showing for a 10-inch tablet, but remember, there are models like the iPad and Transformer Pad Infinity that can deliver equal or better results without the aid of a dock.

On the plus side, we do appreciate the optional battery life widget HP included, which shows you the remaining juice for both the tablet and the base. Not exactly a consolation for such sub-par runtime, but at least you get a sense of how quickly you're losing steam.

## THE COMPETITION

Like we said, ASUS doesn't have all that much competition in the dockable Android tablet category. The Lenovo IdeaTab S2110 we reviewed a year ago has been discontinued, and nothing similar has taken its place. Acer has some dockable tablets, but they all run Windows 8; the closest thing we can recommend is the forthcoming Iconia A3, and even that's not a fair match, as it's a lower-price product with inferior specs (1,280 x 800 screen, et cetera).

The most direct competitor, perhaps (aside from anything made by ASUS), is the Toshiba Excite Pro, a 10-inch tablet with a sharper 2,560 x 1,600, 300-ppi screen and the same Tegra 4 chip used



in the SlateBook x2. At \$500, it's priced similarly, and it comes with 32GB of internal storage, not 16 (either way, you get a microSD slot). The obvious trade-off, so far as we can tell, is that the keyboard is sold separately for \$42, and even then, it's not a proper keyboard dock, but a wireless unit. At any rate, we haven't tested it, so unfortunately we can't vouch for its performance or battery life. But, we did review the Excite Write (the same tablet, just with a pen digitizer) and we encountered some performance glitches. Hopefully, though, that's the sort of thing Toshiba can address with a firmware update across the entire Excite line.

Double the weight with a dock for two more hours of battery.

If you do insist on waiting for ASUS to refresh the current offerings, it's already announced the new Transformer Pad Infinity, which also has a Tegra 4 chip and 2,560 x 1,600 screen. It's also capable of 4K output, according to ASUS, though that's mostly a gimmick at this point, if we're being honest. Excited? So are we, but the company hasn't actually announced US pricing or availability yet, so we can't even say for sure how long you might be waiting for this. (Not longer than the incoming holiday season, we hope.)

Rounding out the list are a couple top-shelf tablets you've probably heard of, though neither was designed



to be used with a keyboard dock (not a first-party one, anyway). These include the Sony Xperia Tablet Z, a thin, waterproof tablet that starts at \$500. Then, of course, there's the iPad (\$499 and up), not that that's a helpful recommendation for anyone already sold on Android.

## WRAP-UP

This probably goes without saying, but the HP SlateBook x2 is only a smart buy if you intend to make good use out of the keyboard. It's important to remember that the dock isn't a fun extra here: it comes in the box, and it defines the way you're supposed to use the product. If you do expect to spend lots of time on email and note-taking, this is the most comfortable keyboard dock on any Android tablet, and it helps improve the battery life too.

As a standalone tablet, though, the

x2 offers skimpy battery life and awkwardly placed volume and power buttons that can be hard to find by feel — even if you've been using it for a while. The best thing we can say about the tablet itself is that its Tegra 4 chip yields fast, stable performance. Even then, Tegra 4 will probably power lots of devices released in the coming months, so it's not like HP can really claim credit for that. Basically, then, if the keyboard is just an accessory for you, you'd be better off spending \$500 or so on a tablet with longer battery life and a more stunning screen. It's not like you've got any shortage of options. **D**

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*Dana Wollman is a managing editor, overseeing Engadget's product reviews. When she's not testing Ultrabooks, she trains for marathons and tries her best to visit places outside New York City.*

## BOTTOMLINE

### HP SLATEBOOK X2

# \$480



## PROS

- Fast, stable performance
- Tablet is lightweight
- Comfortable typing experience
- Price includes the keyboard dock

## CONS

- Awkwardly placed volume rocker, power button
- Mediocre battery life
- Finicky touchpad
- Dim screen

## BOTTOMLINE

This dockable Android tablet offers a comfortable keyboard dock and fast performance for a reasonable price. Just beware of the trade-offs before the plunge.





DISTRO  
09.27.13

# REVIEW

## SONY CYBER-SHOT QX10



Sony's **QX10** 'lens' camera joins the augmented-smartphone accessories game, boosting mobile shooters, while saving a few dollars off a full kit  
By **Zach Honig**

**Earlier this month at IFA**, Sony introduced an entirely new type of point-and-shoot camera. The QX10 and its big brother, the QX100, are missing a built-in LCD. Instead, framing, image review, configuration and even storage are all handled on another device: your smartphone. These "lens cameras," as they've become unofficially known, mount directly on a handset you already own, pairing with Sony's PlayMemories Mobile app via WiFi. The benefits are considerable. The absence of a display allows for a more compact body, improved power



efficiency and a lower price tag. The QX100, for example, includes the same optics as Sony's flagship RX100 Mark II, but retails for \$500, compared to \$750 for its fully equipped counterpart. The QX10 is the more mainstream of the two, with a smaller footprint and an affordable \$250 price tag. We focus on this model just below.

## HARDWARE

Aesthetically, both lens cameras are quite similar, though the QX100 is larger than the QX10 despite its more limited focal length. The reason for the discrepancy is a generous 1-inch, 20-megapixel sensor, and a higher-quality f/1.8-4.9, 3.6x Carl Zeiss lens to match. The QX10, however, sports a 1/2.3-inch, 18.9-megapixel sensor — that's comparable in physical size to what you'd find in a mid-range point-and-shoot. Still, it's substantially larger than the embedded smartphone sensor it's likely to replace, and the f/3.3-5.9, 10x G lens is unmatched by all but the Galaxy S4 Zoom. In fact, you might say this is Sony's answer to Samsung's misstep, and when you factor in cost, compatibility and image quality, Sony comes out far ahead.

In the box, you'll find an instruction manual, the lens camera, a detach-

able smartphone mount with an extending arm, a wrist strap, an NP-BN battery pack rated for 200 shots and a micro-USB cable for charging and wired image transfers. There isn't one accessory you won't need, nor are there any critical components missing, with the exception of a microSD card. The lens measures 1.5 inches high with the smartphone attachment and 1.13 inches without. You connect the two with an embedded bayonet mount. There's also a sliding arm that'll accommodate just about any current phone model, including the Galaxy Note II, and rubber pads positioned where the accessory meets your handset to eliminate any risk of damage when you attach and detach the lens.

We tested the QX10 with both a Galaxy Note II and a Moto X, and it fit on both, though the X's shorter design meant the camera mount often edged too close to the

The lens connects to the phone and Sony's app via WiFi.





phone's volume rocker — the Note offered more real estate. We also tried attaching the camera to an iPhone 4, which was an even tighter squeeze than the Moto X. It did fit, though we'd recommend sticking to a larger device if possible. You can also use the lens on its own, though there aren't many physical controls, and without a viewfinder to speak of, it's a bit of a crapshoot. There are but three buttons: a power control on the top, then a shutter release and a zoom toggle on the left side of the lens. Any settings adjustments — and there aren't many to choose from — are handled directly in Sony's PlayMemories Mobile app, which we'll explore more in the section ahead.

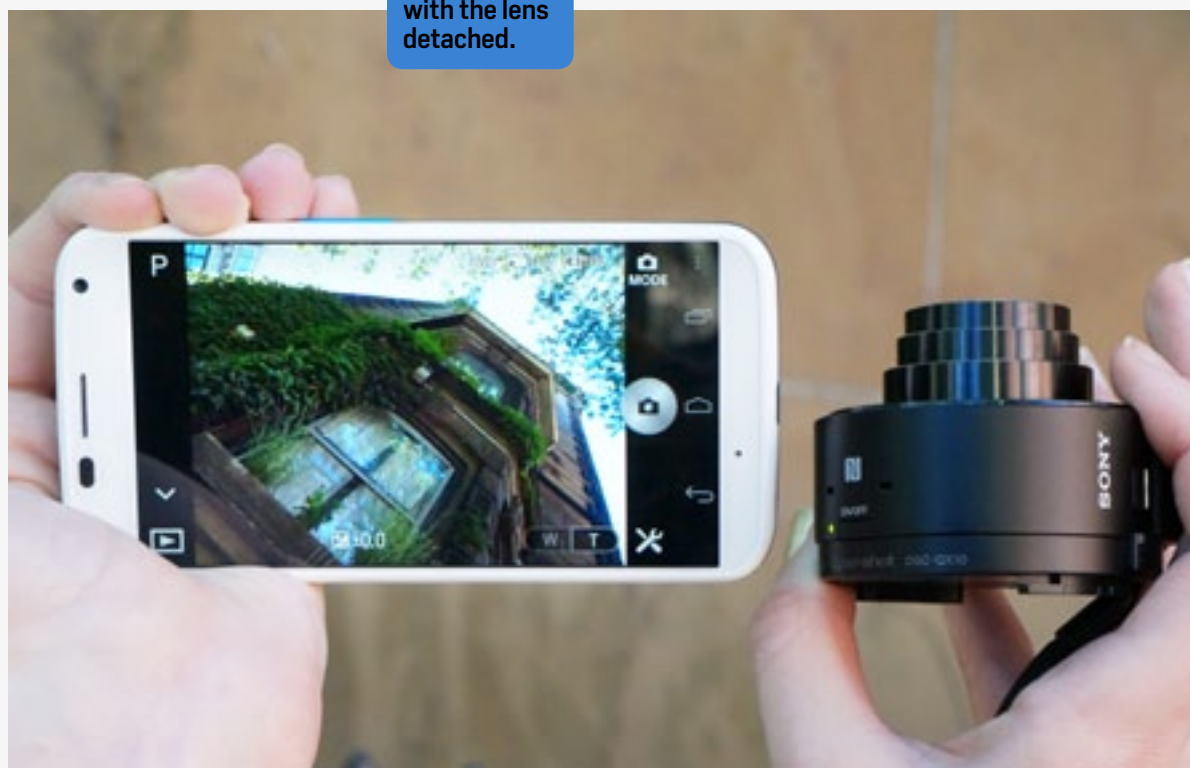
## SOFTWARE

You'll spend nearly all your time operating the QX10 from PlayMemories Mobile on an Android or iOS handset, so app usability here is paramount. We did run into some speed limitations, which we'll explore in the performance section, but overall, the app worked well. The first time you pair with a smartphone, you'll need to connect to your camera's ad-hoc WiFi network just as you would any other network. There's an SSID and

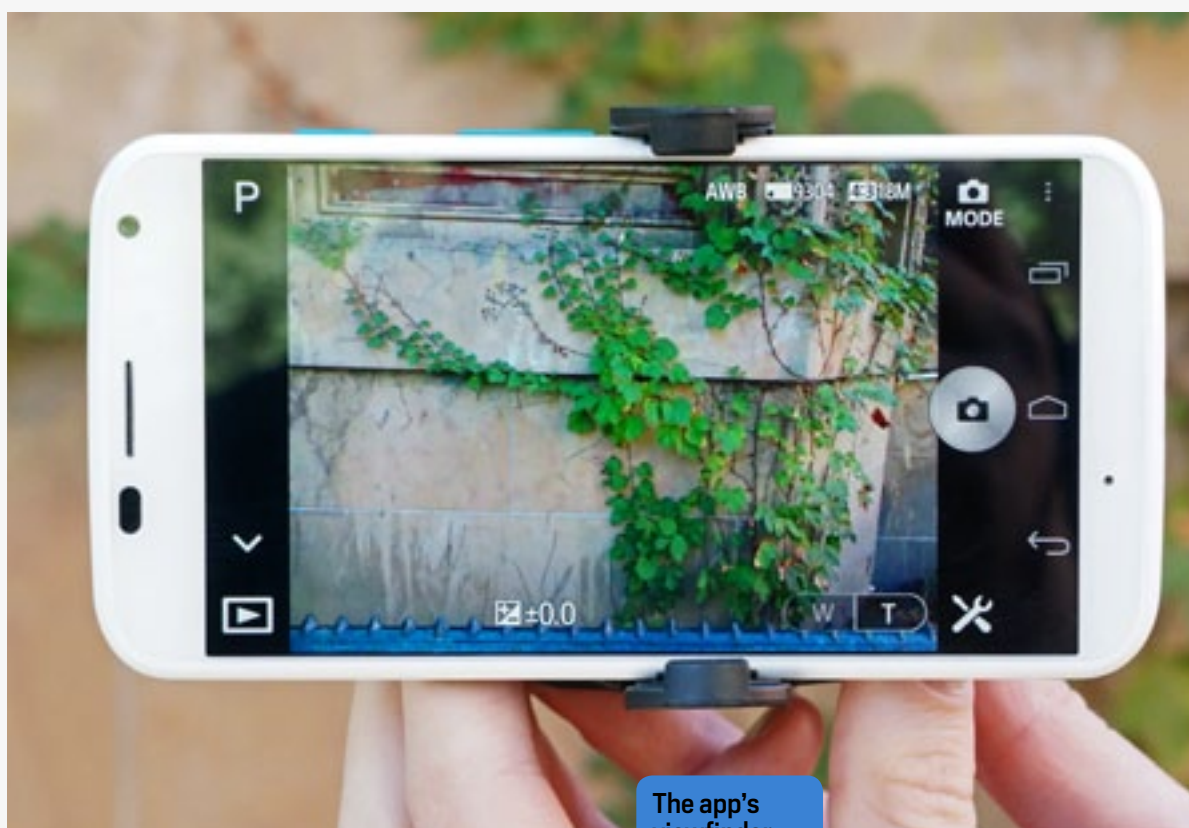
password under the battery door. You can download the app from the App Store or Google Play, and if your phone is NFC-enabled, you can simply tap it to the lens to initiate the download. Once it's installed, launch the app, select the camera and you're good to go.

When you're connected, you'll see a live preview through the lens on your smartphone screen. There's a standard, albeit bare, viewfinder layout, including current mode, resolution and remaining shot readouts, along with a zoom toggle and shutter release (which are duplicated on the camera itself). There's no option to view the remaining battery life, unfortunately, though there is a small indicator on the side of the lens. As for shooting, there are three primary modes to select from. Intelligent Auto is your run-of-the-mill automatic mode; Superior Auto enables some advanced shooting tools, such as macro or Handheld Twi-

You can achieve unique shots with the lens detached.







light; and Program lets you set exposure compensation and white balance. Other settings include turning the camera beep on or off, and selecting the aspect ratio and resolution. The QX10 is very much a point-and-shoot, so, for better or worse, expect the camera do all of the work.

Once you're paired with the camera and using the app, every image you shoot will be stored on your smartphone by default, in addition to the microSD card in the camera, assuming one is installed. From there, you can upload pics to the cloud, including sharing sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. You can't capture directly from a third-party app — yet — but after you shoot, it's easy enough to select your desired image from the gallery and move it to another app from there. Sony released an API (currently in beta), so it's only a matter of time before you'll

be able to control the QX directly from a variety of third-party applications.

## PERFORMANCE AND BATTERY LIFE

If you take a moment to consider the feat Sony's accomplished here, the performance concerns are easier to overlook. But there are issues nonetheless. Most

significant, of course, is the start-up time. As you'll often depend on your smartphone for control, you need to factor in a few extra seconds to power up the camera, connect to WiFi and launch the app. Expect that process to eat about five seconds, perhaps more, though if you're hoping to capture a moving subject, any delay is unacceptable. To avoid this, you can keep the camera and your smartphone powered on in anticipation of an upcoming shot, but you'll wear through the batteries on both devices fairly quickly.

Once you're linked up, the delays are negligible, however. The camera zooms and captures within moments of pressing the software buttons, and instantly when you use the hardware controls. There's only a moment of lag when using the phone's display to frame a shot — it isn't an issue when at the shortest focal length, but if you're zoomed





The battery is rated for about 200 shots on one charge.

all the way in, the lag can make tracking a moving subject difficult. With some practice and patience, it's easy enough to anticipate the camera's response, therefore minimizing the impact. Of course, we wouldn't recommend either QX camera for sports photography, however informal, but everyday shooting should work out just fine.

As for the battery life, we were able to capture 140 images and a bit over three minutes of 720p video on the same full charge. Battery life is tricky to track, as there's only a small indicator on the side of the lens (and none available in the bundled app), so if you're planning a full-day shoot, you might want to bring a spare along. Alternatively, as the QX10 charges using a

standard USB cable, you can plug it into a portable power pack to top off. Your smartphone's battery will take a significant hit as well, since you'll be using the display quite a bit. If your phone can't make it through a full day as it is, expect an even faster drain if you're shooting a lot with the lens camera.

## IMAGE QUALITY

Many of our shots were slightly underexposed, and normally we'd suggest bumping up the exposure compensation to make up for it, but EV is only available in Program mode with the QX10. If you want to take advantage of the advanced (camera-controlled) features available in Superior Auto, you'll need to forgo exposure compensation, unfortunately, and leave aperture and shutter speed entirely



 Sample gallery of photos taken with the QX10 lens camera. 

up to the camera. Colors, on the other hand, while accurate, were oversaturated at times, resulting in some slightly exaggerated blues and reds. White balance was typically accurate, though the camera struggled a bit with some very dim scenes at a restaurant.

One nifty benefit of the QX10's design is that you can shoot without the lens attached to your smartphone. That means you can hold the camera overhead, out in the distance or at low angles without moving the viewfinder, resulting in some pretty unique images. And, with the cam-

era always set to expose automatically, you don't even need to evaluate the light from obscure angles, letting you snap interesting shots with ease. Additionally, the camera has a flat bottom surface, so you can easily rest it on a table or ledge for long exposures or video shoots. There's also a tripod socket on the bottom, which should come in handy for group shots and the like.

## THE COMPETITION

Sony has a unique position in this space, being that the QX10 and QX100 are the





only cameras of their kind currently on the market. That will likely change within a few months, assuming these Cyber-shots take off, but for now, the QX10's primary competitor is Sony's pricier QX100. We haven't had an opportunity to take that latter model for an extended spin, but considering the included optics, we're willing to bet the experience is superior to that of the QX10.

Of course, you could always opt for a full-fledged point-and-shoot, and there are a few in this price range, but you've likely landed on the QX10 because of its unique ability to mount on your smartphone and share images instantly to the web. If you're looking for an alternative and you're in the market for a smartphone, too, you might consider Samsung's Galaxy S4 Zoom. We weren't tremendously impressed with this hybrid smartphone and camera, but if you don't need a ton of processing power and prefer the flexibility of a zoom lens that's always around, it's worth a look, as is the Nokia Lumia 1020.

## WRAP-UP

We were admittedly hesitant when we first heard about Sony's new lens cameras, and we weren't even convinced after an extended hands-on earlier this month. But after spending a full week with the QX10, including shoots in Berlin and Alaska, it's hard not to revel in Sony's accomplishment. Built-in LCD or not, the Cyber-shot QX10 is truly a fantastic camera. It complements just about any smartphone, and at \$250, it's within reach of many consumers. The image quality is just about as good as it gets for a sub-\$500 point-and-shoot, and while the lag and start-up delays were irritating at times, the overall picture is worth the plunge. **D**

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*Zach is a Senior Associate Editor and heads up Engadget's features content. He's also a lifetime lover of everything aviation and photography.*

## BOTTOMLINE

### SONY CYBER-SHOT QX10

## \$250



## PROS

- Seamless smartphone integration
- Good image quality
- Reasonably priced

## CONS

- Noticeable preview lag
- Limited manual control
- Mediocre battery life

## BOTTOMLINE

Sony's QX10 "lens camera" is a must-have accessory for any serious smartphone photographer.



# The Future Foretold

Six innovative flops  
that prove timing isn't  
everything — but it  
certainly helps

By Jon Turi, Billy Steele  
and Christopher Trout



DISTRO

09.27.13

THE FUTURE FORETOLD

# Microsoft SPOT Watches

## SPOT OFF

The phrase “ahead of its time” is, perhaps, nowhere more apt than in reference to a series of timepieces called SPOT (Smart Personal Objects Technology) watches. Microsoft intended for the underlying technology to extend to everything from coffee makers to refrigerator magnets, but its most notable application came in the form of a series of failed smartwatches. Bill Gates debuted the first batch of the thoughtful tickers, from the likes of Fossil and Suunto, at CES in January 2003. While not nearly as full-featured or smartphone-friendly as Pebble or Samsung’s Galaxy Gear, the pieces contained a custom chipset that included an ARM7 CPU and 100MHz RF receiver and were capable of displaying MSN Messenger and Outlook email missives, calendar appointments and personalized news updates via a \$59 MSN Direct annual subscription.

The first SPOT watches hit retailers in early 2004, with refreshed hardware and expanded

partnerships with brands like Swatch keeping the initiative alive through the next couple of years. However, time was not on SPOT’s side, and manufacturers ceased sales of the watches in 2008, with the FM-based information service living on in GPS devices until MSN Direct’s ultimate demise in 2012. During the 2003 keynote that started it all, Gates said, “Microsoft has always been focused on unlocking the power of computing to help people realize their full potential.” Unfortunately, with limited applications and a yearly fee, plus the lack of baked-in Bluetooth or cellular connectivity, Microsoft’s smartwatches never fully realized their own potential.



MICROSOFT (BOTTOM RIGHT)



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**MODERN  
EQUIVALENT**  
Pebble





# Apple Newton

## WHAT GOES UP...

Popularly known as the predecessor to the tablet and, to some degree, the smartphone, Apple's early PDAs, collectively known as Newton, were, like Microsoft's smartwatch, an early attempt at breaking computing away from the desktop. The first of Apple's entries, the MessagePad, appeared in 1993. The initial model started at \$699 and came with 4MB of onboard storage, a 336 x 240 screen and the first-ever ARM processor on an Apple device. By comparison, the first-generation iPad started at \$499, offered a 9.7-inch [1,024 x 768] screen and came in 16, 32 and 64GB models [no stylus included]. Despite reportedly strong sales figures, critics harped on the Newton's poor battery life and subpar handwriting recognition — one of the device's main selling points.

While many have praised the Newton line for its prophetic effect on mobile technology, Apple's earliest tablet was born during a tumultuous time. After years of rising profits, the once-successful company began to bleed cash and then-CEO John Sculley, who'd championed the platform, resigned from his post the same year Apple released the first MessagePad. Steve Jobs would return to the helm of the company three years later, and officially gave Newton the axe in 1998. More than a decade later, Apple resurrected the tablet with the best-selling slate on the market today, the iPad.

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**MODERN  
EQUIVALENT**  
Apple iPad

SSPL / GETTY IMAGES



# Dell Streak 5



## LESS IS MORE

Dell's Froyo-packed tablet / phone arrived in 2010 with a 5-inch display that many considered gargantuan at the time. We were immediately smitten with the hardware and its larger display. However, the Streak 5 arrived with a then-aging Android 1.6 OS in addition to surpassing the pocketable size limit. The behemoth did last more than a full workday on a charge, which helped soften the blow from a few of those user-experience hiccups. Despite much initial fanfare, though, launch issues plagued the gadget from the start: a delayed launch in the US accompanied both a prolonged wait to upgrade from Android Donut,



and a massive \$549 price tag for an off-contract, SIM-locked version.

Of course, handsets sporting a similar stature or larger are the norm today and a cost in that ballpark is expected for unlocked versions of the latest and greatest. Two months after the Streak was officially read its last rites, Samsung's super-sized Galaxy Note arrived and hit the ground running. At the beginning, size was a concern here as well, but the 5.3-inch slab ultimately won the hearts of those looking to live mobile life large. It's now on its third installment of a device that's sold more than 38 million smartphones at last count.

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## MODERN EQUIVALENT

Samsung Galaxy Note 3





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THE FUTURE FORETOLD

# QUBE

## UN-DEMAND

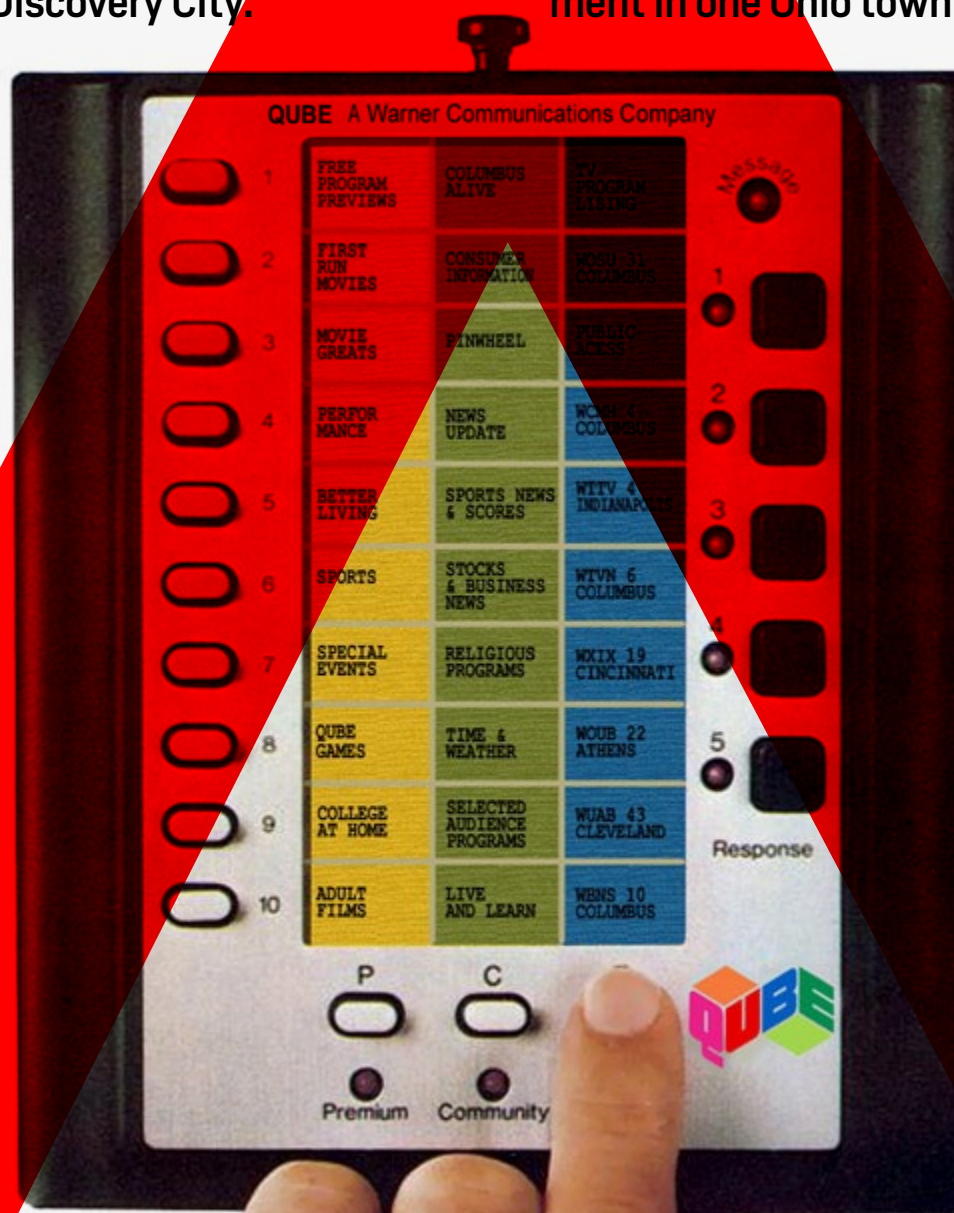
Back in 1977, Warner Cable launched QUBE in Columbus, Ohio, offering pay-per-view and special-interest programming for the first time. The box was built by Pioneer and served up 30 channels in total. QUBE's set-top box and tethered remote gave viewers pay-per-view options (auto-billed like cable companies do today), broadcast networks and community channels that ranged from Pinwheel (later Nickelodeon) to weather and more. Warner expanded the system — which carried a cost of about \$200 — and its wired, guide-wielding remote control to other large markets while accounting for nearly half of the homes in The Discovery City.



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**MODERN  
EQUIVALENT**  
Roku

Although QUBE went on to carry interactive programs a few nights a week and began on-demand content, Warner Cable faced debt issues and only amassed a couple million customers. Amidst financial hardship and growing privacy concerns, the outfit eventually sold properties like Nickelodeon before pulling the plug completely in 1984. On-demand programming remained a cable mainstay and eventually set-top boxes that delivered such content took hold. Gadgets like Roku's boxes that stream movies and television shows from Netflix, Hulu, Amazon and HBO Go all owe a debt to Warner's experiment in one Ohio town.

TIME WARNER (QUBE)





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THE FUTURE FORETOLD

## GAME OVER

Although wearable headsets and VR are making a strong comeback thanks to tech like the Oculus Rift, Nintendo had a 3D-gaming display of its own that debuted back in 1995. The \$180 Virtual Boy was a 32-bit miniature console powered by a handful of AA batteries and rested on a humble, two-legged stand. It was the tabletop nature of the device that kept a fully immersive experience at bay while also contributing to a wealth of lower-back issues and *Wario Land*-induced headaches. By the time this Boy hit shelves, the buzz was already high for Nintendo's next console — the N64 — and many had committed fully to the then 4-year-old SNES.

Even with an automatic pause feature built into most games for resting one's eyes, only 14 titles made it to the US — hardly a compelling library for any sort of widespread, long-term adoption. Couple that with red-and-black, 224 x 1 displays that used mirrors and a 3D gimmick to produce a CRT effect and that's hardly a recipe for success. Especially when you're unable to comfortably wear the thing like a set of goggles similar to what the folks at Oculus plan to bring to market.

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**MODERN  
EQUIVALENT**  
Oculus Rift



# Sony Data Discman

## A QUICK READ


Sony was riding high by the end of the '80s following its success with the Walkman and its newest rising star, the CD player. The compact disc proved to be a windfall for the company as the format surged in popularity, jumping from a 20 percent share of the audio market in 1986 to more than 55 percent and growing in 1991. Much like Samsung's current overlapping product roster, Sony invested in convergent technologies to see what stuck, leveraging digital disc technology in products like the MiniDisc player and the pioneering Data Discman, a device that played "electronic books."

The Data Discman arrived in the US in 1991 and boasted portability with a form factor the size of a large paperback, weighing about two pounds and offering an LCD display. Sony offered



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**MODERN  
EQUIVALENT**  
Amazon Kindle



content on proprietary, 3.5-inch disc-based cartridges that cost \$30 to \$70 and held 100,000 pages of text or 32,000 graphic images. Although it persisted for nearly a decade in various iterations, it failed to capture the US market. Its initial \$550 price tag and costly discs were certainly prohibitive for would-be early adopters of the e-book format, and its "portability" was undercut by the push for slimmed-down devices. While the company did circle back to the concept in 2004 with its LIBRIe device and in 2006 with the Sony Reader, it lost its head start in the e-book game. Amazon's Kindle debuted in 2007 at a cost of \$399, offering access to 88,000 books, along with a variety of newspapers and magazines, all available directly through Amazon's own ecosystem. The time and technology were right and the Kindle set the market ablaze, selling out in just five and a half hours after its launch. 





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**It pays to double check them all.**

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**MAERSK  
TRIPLE-E**



MAERSK





# ESC

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**VISUALIZED**

## MAERSK TRIPLE-E

There's always risk when investing in new projects and technology and in 2011, Danish company Maersk went all in with a multi-billion-dollar order of Triple-E container ships, dubbed "the world's largest" on the water today. The ships are 1,312 feet long (compared to the 1,454-foot-tall Empire State Building) and weigh 165,000 metric tons. While massive, it's Maersk's most economical yet, using 20 percent less fuel than its E-Type predecessor and emitting 50 percent less CO2 per container moved than the average. Still, Maersk's costly gamble may have failed, with CEO Soren Skou telling the *Wall Street Journal*, "when these ships were ordered, ours and everybody else's view on growth was somewhat different than what it turned out to be."



Construction and loading of the massive Triple-E.





# SETH PORGES



The **TECHNOLOGY WRITER** on the strut-inducing Walkman and how Kickstarter is ripe for industry idea-picking

**What gadget do you depend on most?**  
Everybody probably says smart-phone — and with good reason. I'll take that as granted, and add in my projector. It's the one gadget that I can use, and actually





**“I still think there’s something so perfect about the word ‘Walkman.’ It sort of makes me want to strut.”**

feel like I’m tuning out or disconnecting. It turns my white wall into a peaceful respite from whatever chaos is around me.

**Which do you look back upon most fondly?**

My old Archos Jukebox MP3 player, which served me well way back in the early 2000s. It was one of the first hard drive-based MP3 players and it was built like a tank. I dropped, stepped on and absolutely abused that guy for years. Years! And it never once flopped out on me. It probably lasted me longer than any other single piece of electronics in the past 15 years. How often does any gadget last anybody a year, much less *years*, these days?

**Which company does the most to push the industry?**

At the moment, if I’m going to say “Which company has the most specific technologies on the horizon that I am legitimately excited

about?” the answer is undoubtedly Google. Works-in-progress such as the company’s self-driving cars, Google Now and Google Glass are all *very* big deals.

Of course, it’s easy to pick the Goliath, so let’s point out a few Davids that keep me smiling: Roku single-boxedly transformed Netflix’s streaming service from something that was largely relegated to computer monitors into a living room staple, and I’m genuinely impressed by the Roku 3’s ability to use its remote control to transform any off-the-rack headphone into a wireless audio device. And it’s absolutely impossible to overstate the importance of Kickstarter in the gadget industry these days. If it feels like big companies are scouring the site for ideas that they can push to market before the little guys can get their funding and production together... well, that’s because they probably are.

**What is your operating system of choice?**

OS X. Though I dabble in Windows from time to time.

**What are your favorite gadget names?**

I still think there’s something so perfect about the word “Walkman.” It sort of makes me want to strut.



**What are your least favorite?**

Anything along the lines of “TKJF9000fs.” If you don’t give your product an easy-to-remember name, you’re basically giving Best Buy reps carte blanche to steer customers towards whichever product they like (and have the highest margins).

**Which app do you depend on most?**

Waiting is an unintended and often unavoidable consequence of the modern world. The one-two punch of *Plants Vs. Zombies 2* and *Civilization Revolution* makes it that much easier.

**What traits do you most deplore in a smartphone?**

Oh boy, I could go on, but it all comes down to misinterpreting our actions. At best, smartphones are mind-readers, capable of realizing exactly what letter we are

trying to tap on a virtual keyboard (even if we miss it by a millimeter), or what swipe or action we *really* meant to make.

The best phones serve as friction-free conduits between our brain’s intentions and on-screen actions. The worst don’t realize that “Im” should be “I’m,” and accidentally call 911 while sitting in my pocket (it’s happened).

And a lot of Android phones have a lot of work to do in terms of making their native virtual keyboards usable.

**Which do you most admire?**

Let’s just take a second to marvel at the very existence of apps. Remember when you had to wait for phone companies to give you new features? Yeah.

**What is your idea of the perfect device?**

Something that makes you happy far more often than it makes you angry.

And something that doesn’t make you *swear* it’s all part of a plot to force you to upgrade every year.

**What is your earliest gadget memory?**

I remember opening up my first NES, and getting blown away when somebody showed me how to get to the warp pipes in level 1-2. I can also vaguely remember popping *Pitfall* into an Atari. The alligators always got me.



**What technological advancement do you most admire?**

He (or she) who can create a better battery, wins. Mobile technology is a trade-off between horsepower and battery power. If we can create new chemistries that can suck up juice faster, hold it longer and discharge it with greater force... well, that'll transform everything from smartphones to electric cars.

**Which do you most despise?**  
CAPTCHA.**What fault are you most tolerant of in a gadget?**

Delivering half-baked features, as long as they don't interfere with the product's core functionality. There's nothing wrong with letting normal users serve as beta testers... as long as they are open about the fact, and can push updates as quickly as possible.

**Which are you most intolerant of?**

Delivering half-baked features that *do* interfere with a product's core functionality. Also: Unnecessary OS skins baked into cell-phones. Basically bloatware.

**When has your smartphone been of the most help?**

Strange city, tourist district, decent food. Normally, you're

allowed to pick two of these three. Smartphones let me pull a hat trick.

**What device do you covet most?**

If I had unlimited funds and lived in a city where owning a car made sense, I'd hop on a Tesla Model S waiting list ASAP. Those things look incredible.

**If you could change one thing about your phone what would it be?**

Unlimited battery life.

**What does being connected mean to you?**

It means finding great whiskies, staying in touch with friends and earning an audience for work you spend a lot of time on. Just make sure you unplug any chargers with LEDs in your bedroom before crashing. Those things'll mess with your sleep.

**When are you least likely to reply to an email?**

If I read one on my phone while I'm out, it gets marked as read, and it then gets buried under a deluge of other incoming messages before I can get back to it on my computer.

**When did you last disconnect?**

I was on a trans-Atlantic flight this week. Airplane mode works. 





**IN REAL LIFE** is an ongoing feature where we talk about the gadgets, apps and toys we're using in real life.

# SAMSUNG GALAXY MEGA 6.3

**ENGADGET HAS ALREADY** reviewed Samsung's Galaxy Mega 6.3, but I wanted to know what it's like to live with such a massive smartphone for a long stretch of time. Would it simply be too big, or would I eventually get used to it... and maybe even like it?

From an ergonomic perspective, the Mega still feels as colossal as ever. While I can fit it in my pocket, it's not exactly discreet. Let's put it this way: the Galaxy Note 3 appears dainty by comparison. And the Mega is clearly a two-handed device — at best, I can only reach two-thirds of the screen with one thumb. This is a mini tablet that happens to take phone calls, and there's no pretending otherwise.

The size does have its advantages, though. The gargantuan screen is ideal for videos, and Samsung's multi-win-

dow feature really comes into its own with such a large display; apps have room to breathe. As you'd imagine, the big battery is equally handy at times. I have yet to consume a full charge in one

day, even though I spend entirely too much time on Instagram and Twitter.

I would definitely consider the Mega if I couldn't justify purchasing both a phone and a tablet, as it does both jobs reasonably well.

The smartphone's real weakness is its mid-range performance. It's usually fine, but there are a few too many reminders that the handset isn't a flagship — an interface hiccup here, a slow-loading web page there. The camera is also disappointing, and performs poorly even in daylight. I've seen numerous instances where the 8-megapixel sensor botched the color reproduction or lost details in highlights. At least I can't fault Telus' network. While I've been stuck on 3G more than I'd like, I've had better coverage and overall performance from Telus than I'm used to in my region.

The Mega is a fine handset, but you really need to value screen size above all else for it to make sense — and I don't. There are plenty of smaller devices that strike me as better deals. The Galaxy Note II is still available at a similar price on Telus' network, and it's more capable overall. It's also tough to resist the siren's call of the Galaxy Note 3 — its performance may just be worth the added expense. Much as with the Huawei Ascend Mate I reviewed in the spring, the Mega is a specialized tool. It won't have trouble pleasing its target audience, but most of us are better off with something more compact. — *Jon Fingas*



The week that was in 140 characters or less

# Gold Standards, Maydates and Number Games

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REHASHED

@jeffreyremick

Apparently Samsung is coming out with a gold Galaxy S4 to compete with the fancy new iPhone. Are we just begging to have things stolen?

@danielwcooper

Like, imagine it.  
“Hi Amy from  
Mayday. My  
Kindle’s “Broken,”  
fancy a chat?  
Maybe dinner at  
my place? #firehdx

@maddox

Did Roku  
seriously just ship  
2 skus \$10 apart  
(720p vs 1080p)?

@wadhwa

Reinventing a company like Blackberry while public is like re-engineering a plane while in flight. Needs to be grounded and rebuilt.

@tapbot\_paul

The Surface Pro is 95% faster than most laptops. Err, I mean it has 50% faster graphics. Actually I mean its 20% faster.

THE STRIP

BY SHANNON WHEELER



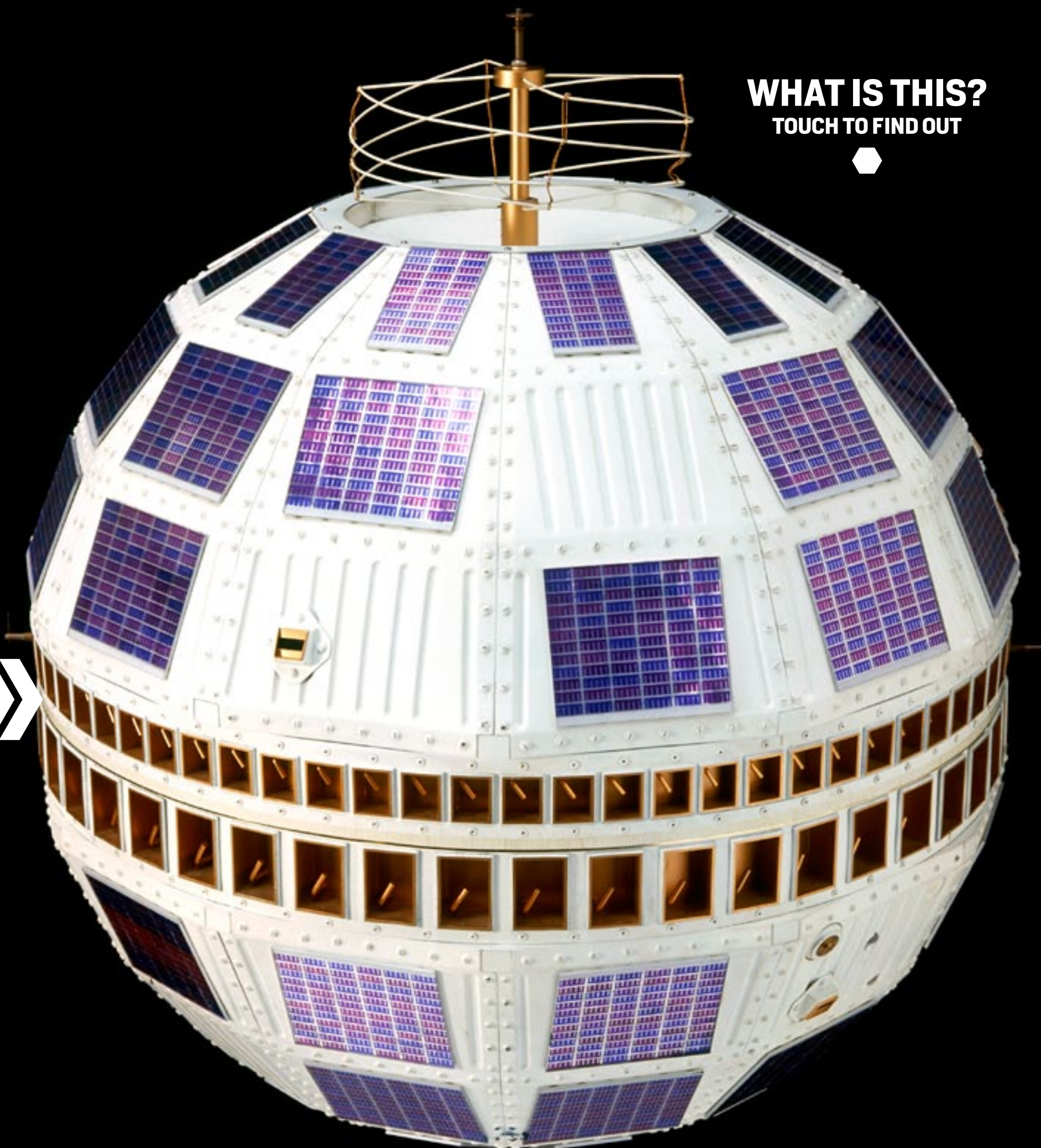


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# TIME MACHINES

**WHAT IS THIS?**  
TOUCH TO FIND OUT



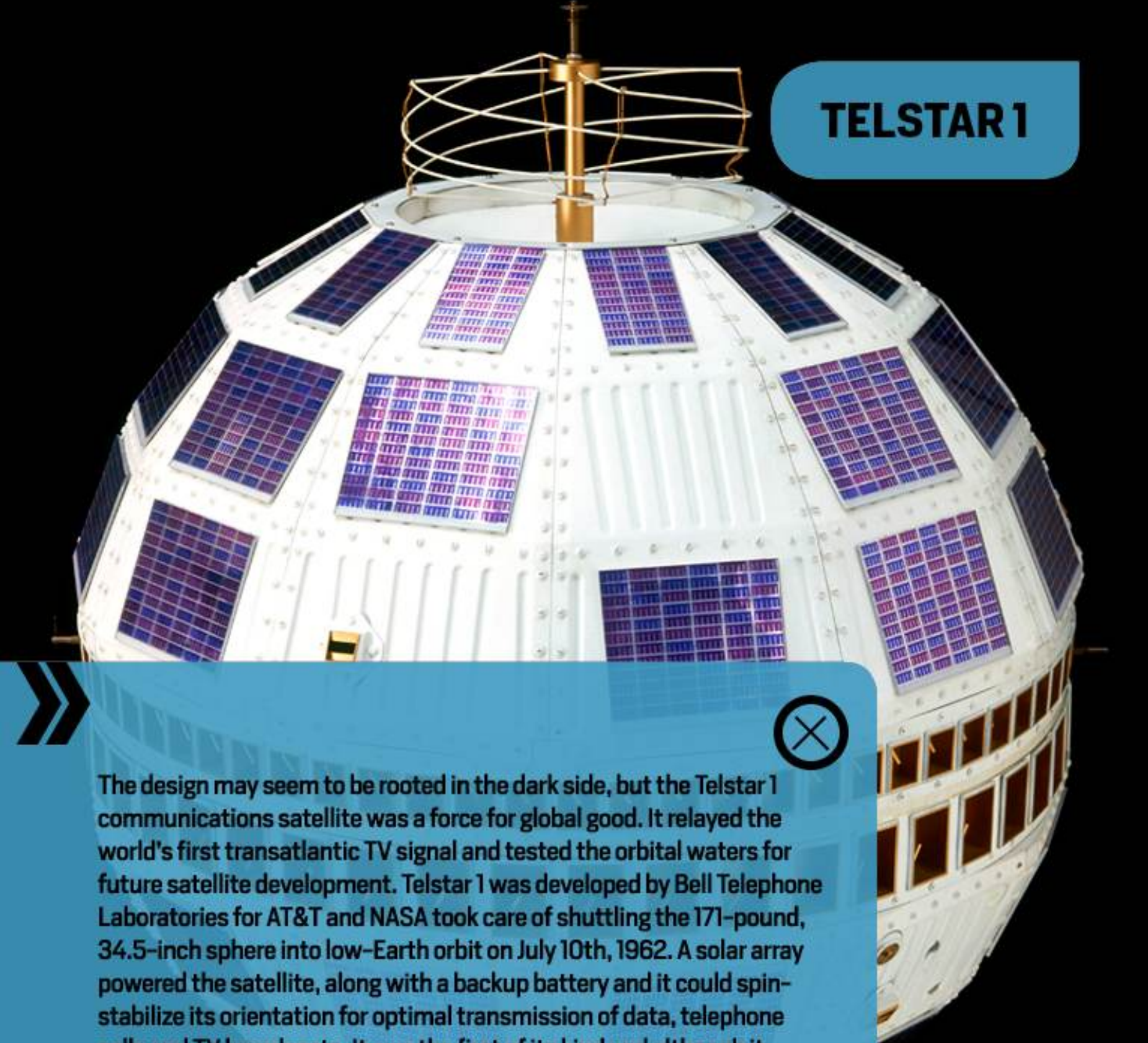


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# TIME MACHINES

## TELSTAR 1



The design may seem to be rooted in the dark side, but the Telstar 1 communications satellite was a force for global good. It relayed the world's first transatlantic TV signal and tested the orbital waters for future satellite development. Telstar 1 was developed by Bell Telephone Laboratories for AT&T and NASA took care of shuttling the 171-pound, 34.5-inch sphere into low-Earth orbit on July 10th, 1962. A solar array powered the satellite, along with a backup battery and it could spin-stabilize its orientation for optimal transmission of data, telephone calls and TV broadcasts. It was the first of its kind and although it was only operational for a few months, and could only broadcast television signals for limited durations, it informed the future of telecommunications, space exploration and, quite possibly, the stylings of a fictional, moon-sized space station.



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